A SECOND

LETTER

To a Gentleman Diſſenting from the

CHURCH of *ENGLAND*;

WHEREIN

The great and popular Pleas of Diſſenters againſt Communion with the Church are refuted, and reflected back upon themſelves.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.
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Ex ore tuo ——

Happy is he that condemneth not himſelf in that Thing which he alloweth. Rom. xiv. 22.

The SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE.

THERE being no greater Impropriety that I can perceive in introducing a *Letter* than a general Diſcourſe with a *Preface*, eſpecially a *long Letter* with a *ſhort Preface*, I ſhall no more ſcruple to introduce *this*, than I did the *former*, in that Manner.—— The Title Page intimates, that it is both *defenſive* and *offenſive*. In the defenſive Part, wherein I undertake to vindicate the eſtabliſh'd Church againſt the great and popular Objections of Diſſenters, I

am generally brief, *that* having already been executed by much abler Pens, and particularly, by the *London* Divines in the *Collection of Caſes and other Diſcourſes to recover Diſſenters to the Communion of the Church of* England. But in the other Part, wherein I *retort* their Objections, and ſhew them as ſtrongly concluſive againſt Communion with *their own* Churches, I have enlarged more; few, I think, if any, at leaſt, profeſſedly, and in a ſet Treatiſe, having gone before me in *that* way. The *turning* thus *their Artillery upon their own Heads*, will be allowed, I ſuppoſe, fair War, a juſtifiable and reaſonable Treatment of an Adverſary, and, perhaps, is the right way of treating thoſe we have to do with, although, hitherto, in my humble Opi-

Opinion, too much neglected by our Writers. When we urge them with Scripture, they find ways to darken and pervert it; and when with Reaſoning, they make a Shift, to oppoſe ours with ſome Counter-reaſonings of their own, which however deceitful or inconcluſive, may paſs, and fatally impoſe upon the weak, or the unattentive. But when they are plainly ſhewn to have in *their* Churches the ſame Blemiſhes or Defects with which they upbraid ours, and to do the ſame Things, or Things tantamount with thoſe for which they profeſs to withdraw themſelves from its Communion, they muſt be very obſtinate and perverſe, if they are not taken down, and put effectually to Silence.

It might be, perhaps, worth ones while to take ſome Pains upon this Argu-

Argument, if it were only to embarraſs them, and ſtop their Mouths, and keep them in time to come, from attacking the Church with theſe Objections in ſo *triumphant* a Manner as they are wont to do. But I had a farther and more important View in it, namely, to ſet before them *a plain Argument for Conformity, which has, hitherto, been very little, if at all, preſſed upon them.* For if all our Churches are alike or equally faulty and defective, why ſhould they make it a greater Difficulty to conform to the eſtabliſhed, than to any other? Nay, in this Caſe, it will be their Duty to conform rather to the Church eſtabliſhed by Law, and the general National Religion, than in manifeſt Violation of all the Laws of Chriſtian Communion, to join themſelves to any ſmall

ſmall tolerated Sect, formed and ſet up in open Rivalſhip and Oppoſition to it; and no other Conduct can be eſteemed either *Rational* or *Chriſtian.*

I am very ſenſible, ſuch an Attempt as the preſent is liable to be conſtrued, as if it were a Charge of, and a Deſign to expoſe their want of Honeſty and Sincerity. But there is no neceſſity for ſuch a Conſtruction. I am free to own, many of their Inconſiſtencies and Self-condemnations here diſcovered, and, perhaps, moſt of them, may be charitably accounted for by the want only of common Attention and Reflection. But if *this* Charge or Imputation be alſo eſteemed diſobliging, I can't help it. Thus much however, I can ſay, ſome Care has been taken

taken that it might not be made *more diſobliging than it is in itſelf*, by *my* manner of purſuing it.

The Reader is deſired to correct the Errors of the Preſs thus:

Pag. 60. *at bottom, read* ate *inſtead of* eat.
72. Line 8. *read* no *inſtead of* not.

A SE-

A SECOND

LETTER

CONCERNING

The Popular Pleas of DISSENTERS.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH I knew you too well to entertain the *leaſt* doubt of your taking in good Part my ſincere and well-meant Endeavours, in my former Letter, to ſerve you in your higheſt Intereſt, I yet found it a very ſenſible Pleaſure to be aſſured of it from yourſelf. And what added much to my Pleaſure, was, your free and ingenuous Confeſſion, that, tho' I was not ſo fortunate, as to give you entire Satisfaction in every Point I had occaſion to touch upon, yet I had done it in ſome, and, particularly, had extorted from you your *old Prejudice*, which always hung about you, and you had been extremely fond of, to wit, that *that Religion is to be always eſteemed beſt, the Profeſſors of which are obſerved to live beſt, and to be moſt ſober, regular, and exemplary in their Converſations.* This, *thought I to myſelf*, is a very material Point gained; and I was ſanguine enough to expect you would have preſently declared for Conformity. But theſe Expectations were ſoon dampt, upon your further ſaying, that *tho' the better Lives of Diſſenters had greatly confirmed you in your Nonconformity, more, indeed, than you now perceive there was Reaſon for, they never had been the ſole ground*

or Reaſon of it; but that the Exceptions againſt Conformity commonly urged by your Writers, tho', indeed, they did not appear to you to prove it ſinful, yet ſeemed weighty enough to determine you againſt it, eſpecially, when there were other Churches you might communicate withal, which were not liable to thoſe Exceptions, but that, if it could be ſhewn, the diſſenting Churches were really liable to the ſame, or the like Exceptions, and your Reaſons againſt Conformity to the eſtabliſhed Church could be fairly thrown back upon your own, you ſhould then think it your Duty, in regard to the Peace of God's Church, to conform rather to the national Eſtabliſhment, than to join with any ſeparate Congregation; and that, in ſuch a Caſe, you would certainly do it. This Declaration raiſed me again; and indeed is the thing which has drawn upon you this ſecond Trouble.

It falls out, Sir, that ſome Thoughts I had publiſhed, Years ago, in three or four looſe Papers, might, in ſome Meaſure, anſwer the preſent Occaſion, the Driſt of thoſe Papers being to ſhew, in divers Particulars, that your Reaſons againſt Conformity to the Church equally preſs upon yourſelves: But, as they were haſtily drawn up, for the Amuſement of a Day, I ſhall not put them into *your* Hands, but take the Liberty, which, I think, I have a Right to do, and for your Sake, the Trouble, to *digeſt them a-new*, to make many *Alterations*, which, I hope, will not be for the worſe, as well as *Additions* to what was then publiſhed. And, upon a Review of the Thoughts which lie before me, I plainly foreſee, ſome of theſe will be ſo large, that the Original Writing will be the leaſt Part by far, of what I now ſend you. I hope they will not ſwell it to a Bulk, that may diſcourage you from going through with it. And leſt they ſhould, I promiſe to contract my Thoughts, as much as may be, conſiſtently

ſiſtently with doing Juſtice to my Subject, and ſhall addreſs myſelf to the Buſineſs of it without more Ceremony. For by this Time, Sir, I ſhould hope, you are ſo well ſatisfied of the Cordiality of my Friendſhip and Eſteem for you, that a great deal of Form and Ceremony between us will be no longer neceſſary.

What I have then to do is, in the firſt Place, to offer to your ſerious Conſideration, ſome Things by way of *direct Defence* of the Church of *England* againſt your great and popular Objections; and, more particularly thoſe, which you was pleaſed to hint to me. And becauſe within the Compaſs I have propoſed to take, (eſpecially too having already promiſed you all poſſible and convenient Conciſeneſs) there will hardly be room to ſay all that might be properly and uſefully ſaid upon each Subject, I ſhall avoid, as much as may be, (tho' it may not be *always* convenient, for good old Arguments are not the worſe for wearing) *trite Things*, and ſuch as you every where meet with; which, I hope, however, will not betray me (tho' I am well aware, that is but too natural) to take up with Things that are leſs ſolid. And, leſt I ſhould be thought to fail in this Attempt, that is, not be able to ſhew, *to your Satisfaction*, that all your Objections to the Church are weak and groundleſs, or not weighty enough to juſtify your withdrawing from its Communion, I will try, under each Head, to ſhew, as a *Succedaneum*, that the Objection, ſuppoſing there *be* any Strength in it, is equally ſtrong againſt *your own* Churches: And if I ſhould be ſo happy, as to make you ſenſible of this, which, I own, I have great Hopes of doing, (for you muſt, I ſhould think, of yourſelf, have been ſenſible of it, if you had only *bethought* yourſelf of making a few eaſy and natural Reflections, upon what you perfectly

fectly well know) you will then, I hope, give me Leave to claim the Performance of your Promiſe, of joining rather with the *eſtabliſhed*, than the *diſſenting* Churches, both being found alike faulty, if either of them are ſo.

In the Execution of the laſt mentioned Part, more eſpecially, of my Deſign, I am very ſenſible it will behove me to walk with a good deal of Warineſs and Circumſpection, not only becauſe my way is, in a manner untrodden, but alſo, becauſe I am to walk almoſt without Light. To be plainer, Sir, your Churches are ſo ſecret in all their Ways, that there is ſcarce any knowing what they are; but to find them out, we muſt grope and feel for them, as in the Dark. The Church of *England* acts herein more openly: Every Part of her Government, Diſcipline, and Worſhip is expoſed to the View, the Attacks and Inſults of her Adverſaries. They have the whole Book of *Common Prayer*, and Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, with all the *Rubrics*, *Prefaces*, *Rules* and *Orders* concerning the Service thereof, *(not excepting the Table to find* Eaſter *for ever)* all the *Injunctions*, *Ordinances*, *Canons* and *Conſtitutions Eccleſiaſtical*, and even the *Common* and *Statute Law*, ſo far as concerns Eccleſiaſtical Matters, to canvaſs and cavil at: While your Churches, having no common Rules of Diſcipline or Worſhip, which you hold yourſelves obliged to walk by, or, if you have any, not having made them public, and laid them before the World, for our Examination and Diſcuſſion, cannot be eaſily attack'd upon thoſe Heads. And this, as I intimated before, makes the Taſk I have undertaken ſo difficult; and indeed, is no ſmall Diſadvantage that moſt Writers on the Side of the Church lie under. Upon this Footing, I often think a Controverſy with you is ſome-

ſomething like fighting with a Ghoſt, which has nothing one can level a Blow at, and make any Impreſſion upon. Hence it is that in our Controverſies, the firſt Attack has been commonly from *you*, and *we* have been forced to be *almoſt always* on the *defenſive* Side; and this, I dare ſay, has made many judge, it is agreed between us, that the Order and Worſhip of *your* Churches is every way *right*; and the only Controverſy is, Whether thoſe of *our* Church are defenſible, or not: Whereas, if the *Rules and Orders* (in caſe you have any) or, for want of theſe, if but the *Acts* of your Churches, and your general *Dealings* with your People, nay, if only the Prayers that are offered up in all your Congregations, tho' but on one Lord's Day in the Year, and the preciſe manner wherein the Sacraments are adminiſtred among *you*, were but as public, and in every Body's Hands, as *ours* are, I am ready to think your Miniſters would have Employment enough to *defend* their *own*, and not much Leiſure to *inſult our* Quarters.

Theſe Things, Sir, concerning the Variety and Diſformity of your Ways, and the Difficulty of coming at any certain Knowledge of many of them, for want of public, authentic *Rules and Ordinances* about them, and, I add now, by reaſon of the general Shyneſs of your People of revealing and diſcloſing them to *us* (for that, I aſſure you, is a Thing much taken Notice of) theſe Things, I ſay, I thought it proper to premiſe, that you might not expect from me a fuller and more complete Diſcovery of all your Ways and Practices, than you reaſonably ought, and that, if I ſhould miſtake any of them, I might be the more eaſily forgiven, or my Correction be the more gentle. I will promiſe you to take (as well for the Sake of doing *you* Juſtice, as in regard to my Argument) as much Care as I

can

can, not to miſtake your Principles or Practices, or the State and Conſtitution of your Churches, and hope I ſhall not do it in any material Thing. And if my Diſcoveries thereof are few and defective, (which, as I never have been in your Secret they are too like to be) I muſt crave, Sir, your own Aſſiſtance, who, to be ſure, can be no Stranger to any of the Ways of your own Churches, to ſupply what is wanting. And I flatter myſelf, that, between *my own* Obſervations and Reflections, and *your* more certain and intimate *Knowledge* of Things, we ſhall be able to *make up* ſuch Evidence, as will be to you *ſatisfactory*, entirely convince you of the Faultineſs of your own Churches, in thoſe very Things for which ours has been condemned by you, and give, in the End, ſuch an happy Determination to your Thoughts and Reſolutions, as may be for your own Peace, at the ſame Time it promotes that of God's holy Church.

It is, Sir, you know, one of the favourite and fundamental Principles of the Diſſention, that, by the Rule and Order of the Goſpel, every Lay-chriſtian has a Right to chuſe his own Paſtor: They pretend to maintain, that it is this Choice that conſtitutes the Relation between Paſtor and People; which, therefore without it, would be none at all. And hence it comes to be eſteemed a juſt Ground of Separation: So holds Dr. *Owen*, ſo Mr. *Baxter*, and ſo an hundred more. The Inſufficiency of this Plea will be ſhewn by and by; and, in the mean while, I will only obſerve, that it is odious to be ſuggeſted, becauſe it declares againſt Communion with all other Proteſtant eſtabliſhed Churches, as well as ours, even the Church of *Scotland* itſelf, where the vacant Churches are filled, as here, by their proper Patrons.

This divine and unalienable Right, as it is ſaid to be, is pretended to be founded, (1.) Upon certain Precepts,

Precepts, Cautions or Advices in the holy Scriptures, which are thought to imply it: (2.) Upon ſome Inſtances wherein it is ſuppoſed to be uſed and exerciſed; and, (3.) Upon the plain Reaſon of the Thing. The firſt are ſuch as theſe—[a] *Take heed how you hear—Beware of falſe Prophets—Beware of the Conciſion—A Man that is an Heretick avoid—I beſeech you, Brethren, mark them which cauſe Diviſions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learnt, and avoid them.*—So then, becauſe Chriſtians are admoniſhed to remember, and make good Uſe of the Inſtructions they receive, that they may not fail of their due Effects, becauſe they are bid to beware of the Wiles and Deluſions, of Impoſtors, who will come to them with mighty Shews of Piety, and ſpecious Appearances of great Humility and Innocence, becauſe ſuch as corrupt the Faith of the Goſpel, or make Schiſms in the Church, are to be avoided by the People; therefore they muſt have no Paſtors but of their own chuſing, and need not receive any, be they ever ſo orthodox and able, and behave themſelves ever ſo peaceably and inoffenſive *in the Houſe of God*, whom the King or Biſhop, or any Patron whatever, ſhall be legally entitled to ſend to them. This, ſure, is no Argument; and Scripture-evidence muſt run very low, when ſuch Evidence as this is taken up with. I have read, I ſuppoſe, thoſe Paſſages more than an hundred Times, without once thinking of the Right of each Congregation to chuſe its own Paſtor. And now it is ſuggeſted I am not able, I own, to perceive any Sort of Connexion between *them* and *it*. Can you, Sir, think it a likely Thing, that our Lord and his Apoſtle had, in thoſe Cautions, any View to our *Parochial* or *Congregational* Elections? For my Part, I could be well enough content, and al-

[a] Baxter's *Anſwer to Dean* Stillingfleet's, *&c.* p. 136.

moſt

moſt wiſh they were to be taken in ſuch a View: For what would the Cauſe of the Church loſe? What would that of the Diſſenſion gain by it? In that Caſe, the Choice would be limited to thoſe who were found in the Faith, and in the Unity of the Church: And then, Sir, give me Leave to aſk, what would become of the Diſſenting Miniſters? All Leaders, both in Hereſy and Schiſm, are declared unfit, unqualified Perſons, and utterly incapable of being choſen. The Faithful, far from permitted to enter into any *Paſtoral Relation* to them, (much leſs preferably to others) are not permitted to have any *Chriſtian Communion* with them, no, not ſo much as any *intimate unneceſſary* Acquaintance and Familiarity with them in common Life. And I wiſh the Miniſters, who are the unhappy Cauſes of ſuch woeful Diviſions and Offences, and you of the Laity both, (for it greatly concerns you) would lay this ſeriouſly to heart.

(2.) The Scripture Precedents and Examples in Support of the Right pretended to, are alledged with equal Futility and Impertinence. The Election or Call of *Matthias* to the Apoſtolate, in the room of *Judas*, and the Share the People had (if indeed they had any) therein, and that of the ſeven Deacons, come not up to the Point. In the former Caſe, the Election was evidently made by God, nor was *Matthias* elected *their* Apoſtle, or had to *them* any Relation more than the other Apoſtles had, and much leſs ſuch as the Paſtors of particular Congregations now among us, have to *their* Flocks. And the ſame may be ſaid of the ſeven Deacons. They were but preſented, or recommended by the Brethren, as Men of honeſt Report, and not *that* to the paſtoral Charge of ſo many Churches or Congregations, but to the Management of the common Stock. Theſe Inſtances, then, are by no Means pertinent

pertinent to, nor will affect the Merits of the Queſtion now before us. And, indeed, in vain ſhall we look (as any one may well think) for Inſtances of Congregational Elections of their own peculiar Paſtors, in Scripture Times, and thoſe preſently ſucceeding, when every Body knows, the Chriſtian People were not diſtributed and cantoned into diſtinct Pariſhes and ſeparate Congregations, each ſubjected to its own proper Paſtor, but were attended by the Clergy, either in common, or by Turns, or in ſuch other Order and Method, as the Biſhops, their Superiors, in their Prudence, ſhould appoint and direct.

But (3.) If Scripture Evidence fails us, and there be found there, no Proof of Right in the Chriſtian People to chuſe their own Paſtors, is there not, I expect you will aſk, a great deal of *Reaſon* in the Thing? Has not every Man a *Right*, and is he not *bound*, indeed, to take Care of his Soul? Sir, no body denies it. But we think, nevertheleſs, a Man provides very well for his Soul, who ſubmits himſelf to, who hears and regards with meek Heart, and pure Affection, the Inſtructions, and who devoutly attends all the Adminiſtrations of an able and orthodox Miniſter, by whomſoever he be provided. It will be confeſſed, I ſuppoſe, that the King and Biſhops, the two Univerſities, the Lord High Chancellor, the Nobility and Gentry, who are our great Patrons, are more competent Judges of both the Abilities, and Orthodoxy of Clergymen, and of the Fitneſs of each for that particular Station, or Preferment he is deſigned for, than the common Run of Men, eſpecially the Vulgar (if indeed theſe are to be diſtinguiſhed) whoſe greateſt Favourites, and moſt admired Miniſters are, generally, Men of more Sound than Solidity; neither can I ſee any great Reaſon why we may not expect, that Clergy-

men of regular, and exemplary Lives, ſhould be preferred by *them*, as that *ſuch* ſhould be choſen by the *Populace*. I obſerve indeed, Mr. *Baxter*, arguing againſt us upon this Head, ſays plainly, *few of the Rich and great are good*, but moſt of them vicious and profligate, and remarks thereupon, that *all Things are apt to generate their like*. Well! be it ſo; the Nobility and Gentry, we will, at preſent, ſuppoſe, if you pleaſe, are too apt to prefer ſuch Clergymen, as are likeſt themſelves, and ſomewhat tainted with *their* Vices. Are not the Multitude, the low Vulgar (for ſo, I doubt, the Majority of moſt Congregations, Non-conformiſts as well as Conformiſts, may not improperly be called) apt alſo to do the like? No, ſays, Mr. *Baxter*, *It is known by Experience, that Learning and great Worth, does, as Light, ſo reveal itſelf to human Nature, that uſually moſt of thoſe who are loth to be holy themſelves would have a Saint, and an able Man for their Miniſter*. To be ſure, he is right; but how comes it, then, about, that this is true only of Congregational Electors, but not of Patrons? What is the Matter, that theſe naturally *generate their like*, (if I may be pardoned from being ſo free with his Expreſſion) and always affect to promote worthleſs Clergymen, while the other are altogether for Saints, and Scholars? I muſt deſire, Sir, the Nobility, and you of the Gentry, may have the Benefit of this Obſervation, as well as the common People. I hope you are as well, if not ſomewhat better entitled to it. Learning and great Worth, I ſhould think, would as ſoon, like Light, reveal itſelf to an *Engliſh* Nobleman, or Gentleman, as to a common Tradeſman or Mechanic: For it is not the Nature of this Light, to ſhew itſelf moſt to thoſe who are in the Dark. Thoſe who have generally a polite and liberal Education, and may be preſumed to have

Senſe

Senſe and Underſtanding correſponding with it, are as like, to my thinking, *to diſcern real Worth*, to be charmed with it, and reward it, as the more illiterate and uneducated. And methinks too, they would be *as much*, not to ſay *more* aſhamed of making an unworthy and ſcandalous Choice; for ſuch a Choice will either diſcover they want Senſe to diſtinguiſh a *worthy* from an *unworthy* Clergyman, or elſe, that they are ſo abandoned as to prefer, knowingly, an unworthy one, which is a wilful and ſhameful betraying their ſacred Truſt, not very conſiſtent with *nice Honour*. And the Shame of it too, will be *all their own*, whereas, the Shame of ſuch a Choice, when it comes to be divided amongſt a Multitude, is juſt nothing.

But ſuppoſe ſuch a Choice happens to be made, and a Clergyman, againſt whom there lies any juſt Exception, comes to be promoted to a Parochial Cure of Souls, the Pariſhioners, there, are in no worſe Condition than their diſſenting Neighbours, when ſuch an one is choſen by the major Part of a Congregation, creeping into it by Intrigue, as [a] Dr. *Calamy* himſelf confeſſes it ſometimes happens. Nay, indeed, they are in ſomewhat better, eſpecially below in the Country, becauſe they can reſort to ſome neighbouring Church better provided for, with little Inconvenience, and often as conveniently as to their own, which a Diſſenter

[a] The Paſſage of Dr. *Calamy* referred to is in his Sermon, preached at the Ordination of Mr. *John Munkley*, p. 13. in theſe Words—— *It cannot, indeed, be denied, but that, where Perſons have the free Choice of their own Paſtors, Fancy may often very much influence them in the fixing on one rather than another; Intereſt alſo may ſometimes have a great Sway, and there may be room for various Intrigues of deſigning Men, as we now and then ſee and obſerve, to our Sorrow.*

cannot do, the Meetings there being thin ſpread, thoſe eſpecially of the ſame Sect and Denomination. Is he ſuſpected of Hereſy? His Hereſy, ſo long as he keeps it to himſelf, will do *them* no Miſchief. Does he affect to ſpread it? That is giving them Notice to beware of him; and by the Help of Books and of other orthodox and pious Clergymen, to whom all who appear ſollicitouſly concerned for their Salvation will be welcome, may be ſecured from any harm he can do them. If he be profligate and immoral, in a notorious degree, (a Caſe, however, I hope, rarely happening) any Pariſhioner, or other, will highly deſerve Commendation, and hardly fail of it from all that are ſerious, if he endeavour to have him legally removed. And if he fail in his Attempt, (which in a plain Caſe, is not likely) he would be leſs to be blamed, if he ſhould afterwards, reſort, although conſtantly, to ſome other Church. If there be only ſome Faults and Blemiſhes in his Life, and it be not altogether ſo irreproachable as it ought to be, yet if he regularly performs the Offices of Religion, and duly adminiſters the holy Sacraments, (the Efficacy whereof does not depend upon the Worthineſs of the Miniſter) and laudably diſcharges the other Duties of his Function, and his Doctrine be true and good, he may be uſeful to them, and help them forward in the Way that leads to everlaſting Life. Don't be ſurprized, Sir, as if you thought I was advancing *ſtrange* Principles, in favour of vicious Clergymen. Not quite ſo *ſtrange*, Sir, as you may imagine; for I can name you wiſe and good Men, and, among theſe, [a] ſome of the beſt of the old Puritans them-

[a] This is held by Mr. *Samuel Hieron, Preacher's Plea:* By Mr. *Anthony Burges, Treatiſe of Faith and Aſſurance*, p. 503. By Mr. *Reiner*, in his *Reſolution of the Queſtion*, Whether Grace be eſſentially neceſſary to a Miniſter of the Goſpel: By Mr. *Ball, Tryal*

ſelves

ſelves, who have ſaid and maintained the ſame thing; *that God gives miniſterial Abilities to many who have not ſaving Grace*—*that we may lawfully attend upon the Miniſtry of thoſe whoſe Lives and Converſations are offenſive, if their Doctrines be ſound and good*—*that their Lives are no juſt Plea for neglecting their Miniſtry, or avoiding their Communion*—*that God ſometimes makes Uſe of an unregenerate Preacher to convert Souls, and that ſome godly Souls have confeſſed, that ſuch have been the Means of their Converſion.* And in regard to others who are *conſcionable in their Place*, and of unblameable Life, yet of inferior Abilities, and but meanly qualified for the Miniſtry, they hold, that *there are none*, be they ever ſo wiſe, *but may profit by them, and that their Miniſtry, therefore, is not to be forſaken with Contempt.* In all theſe Caſes, the Souls of the People may be very ſafe, under their proper Miniſter, if they will but make Uſe of all the Aſſiſtances he can give them, with ſuch other Helps, as, in great Plenty, lie before them, good Books, religious Diſcourſe and Conference, with Application, in Caſes of Doubt and Difficulty, to ſuch other Miniſters, as may be eſteemed abler, and more pious, who will doubtleſs, afford them free Acceſs, and give them their beſt Aſſiſtance, in all Matters concerning their Salvation.

I expect, Sir, you will tell me (for 'tis a popular and captivating Argument, and is got, I know not how, into every Body's Mouth) that one has, ſurely, as good Right to chuſe his own *Paſtor*, to whom he commits the Care and Guidance of his *Soul*, as to chuſe his *Lawyer* or *Phyſician* with whom he intruſts his *Body* or *Eſtate*. And yet, Sir, as you

of the Grounds, &c. p. 310. Mr. *Perkins* alſo in his *Expoſ. of Chriſt's Sermon*; and Mr. *Pemble* on the *Nature and Properties of Grace*, p. 125. hold the ſame thing.

know

know very well, *Phyſicians*, in many Places, are provided, neither by each *Patient* for himſelf, nor by the collective Body of the Society, nor the Majority of them, but either by the immediate Governors thereof, or by the Publick, while no Body dreams of any Incroachment upon their natural Rights, or any Kind of Hardſhip being put upon them. The Penſioners (for Example) of the Royal Hoſpitals of *Greenwich* and *Chelſea* do not, I preſume, complain, nor does, I believe, any Diſſenter in *England* think they have Reaſon to complain, of any Infringement of their natural Rights, by having *Phyſicians* provided for them by the Government. Nor do the Patients in St. *Thomas's*, or St. *Bartholomew's* think themſelves ill treated, becauſe their *Phyſicians* and Surgeons are not of their *own chuſing*; eſpecially having Liberty to call in the Aſſiſtance of any other in Caſes of Difficulty and Danger, as any Pariſhioner, in extraordinary Caſes, as under Doubts and Perplexities of Conſcience, for Example, may ſeek for paſtoral Inſtruction and Advice, wherever he pleaſes. Nor did our Fleets or Armies, as far as I have heard, ever mutiny on that Account. And as to Lawyers, though you may ordinarily employ whom you pleaſe to plead your Cauſe at the Bar, and to tranſact for you ſome other Matters, yet, in many Caſes one may eaſily name, they are *provided* for you and *impoſed* upon you. And particularly, you muſt abide, tho' your whole Property, or even Life were at Stake, by ſuch Judges as the King's Majeſty ſhall appoint to diſtribute Juſtice in his Dominions. And this ſuggeſts a very plain Difference between the two Caſes of chuſing your Paſtors and chuſing your Lawyers and Phyſicians. Your Paſtors are your Guides and Governors, to whom you owe Subjection in ſpiritual Things; and it is not, I think, quite ſo reaſonable to challenge

to yourſelves the chuſing of *theſe* as of *the other*, who have no Authority over you, who are only to do for you one particular Service, and be paid for it, and when that is done, have no farther Concern with you. Twenty Things more have been already ſaid by others, to ſhew the Difference, and to expoſe the Flaws of this Reaſoning. But my preſent Buſineſs is not ſo much *confuting*, as *repreſenting* this Principle, ſhewing how it is held by You, and how notoriouſly, all the while, *ſlighted* and *counteracted* in your own Practices.

It is well known, that the Preſbyterians have not been always in the Sentiments they now profeſs about this matter. There was a time when they had no Notion of any Right every one had to chuſe his own Paſtor, but argued againſt it juſt in the manner *we* now do. In their *Jus Divinum Miniſterii Evangelici*, this Poſition is laid down, *that the Election of a Miniſter does not belong, by divine Right, wholly and ſolely, to the major Part of every particular Congregation.* And they endeavour to ſupport it, by examining the Texts of Scripture that were uſed to be *then*, and are *now* brought for the contrary Opinion, and ſhewing how they were miſunderſtood, or miſapplied; and by an additional Conſideration of the Miſchiefs and Inconveniences of ſuch Congregational Elections: nor did your Independents, when they came into Power, aboliſh Patronages, and reſtore the People to their pretended Right to chuſe their own Paſtors, or indeed ſhew any great Regard to their Deſires and Inclinations herein. Some, in the Days of Independency, inſtead of being *choſen* by the *Pariſhioners*, were *inducted* into their Livings by a *Troop of Horſe*. After the Reſtoration, indeed, *the Caſe was altered*. The Church was, then, re-eſtabliſhed, and the conformable Clergy put into Poſſeſſion of the Livings.

Livings. And then preſently might be heard a loud and general Cry of all the Sects, your Preſbyterians, Sir, as well others, for the *Divine Right* of the People to deſert their Pariſh Miniſters, and to have Paſtors of their own chuſing. And this Cry has been hitherto continued, nor will, I dare ſay, ever ceaſe, unleſs they ſhould have an Opportunity to ſeize again the public Churches and Revenues. And then, the former Doctrine and Poſition, in all likelihood, would be again taken up, that *the Election of Miniſters does not belong, by Divine Right, to the major Part of particular Congregations.* Such great and ſudden Variations, you muſt needs, Sir, confeſs, have an Appearance of ſetting your Principles to the Times, and State of Things, and give great Cauſe to ſuſpect, that you yourſelves have no mighty Notion, and are not half perſuaded of the Sacredneſs of the Right to chuſe your own Paſtors, but that you maintain it, and bear it ſo high, becauſe it is *convenient*, ſuited to your Circumſtances and Situations. But this will appear more plainly, if we conſider the manifeſt Infractions and Violations of it you are daily guilty of, and I am now going to lay before you.

When any one of your Churches becomes vacant by the *Death* or *Conformity* of the Miniſter, or his being *called to a more loving People*, you, Sir, need not be told, the Way is, to fill it, as ſoon as may be, to prevent the Diſperſion of the Flock, that is to ſay, in other Words, *to prevent their chuſing*, for their Paſtor, the Miniſter of the Pariſh, or ſome other that is conformable, whom, during the Vacancy, they may have a Fancy to hear, and happen to take a liking to. But then who are the Electors? In the leſſer Country Congregations, where there happens to be one eminently ſuperior to all the reſt, it will be eaſily believed, *he* has the Choice of the Paſtor left

to

to him, and it runs in my Head, *You*, Sir, had that Compliment paid you? In other Congregations, two or three, or half a dozen, we will ſay, leading Men and principal Subſcribers lay their Heads together, and pitch upon one for their future Paſtor, the reſt, of courſe, acquieſcing in him. And ſo theſe, in effect, and to all Purpoſes, are the Patrons of the Benefice, or Preferment. In larger and richer Congregations there is often a Competition. And who, in *theſe* Caſes, are the *Electors?* In ſome Churches, and, I ſuppoſe, in all of the Independent or Congregational Way, the *Communicants*, while the mere *Auditors*, who, it may be, are Nine in Ten, are excluded: And when their Suffrages have been admitted, it has been ſaid, none but *the Men*, nor *all theſe* indeed, have any Concern in the Election. Their *Wives*, their *Sons*, and their *Daughters*, their *Man-Servants*, and their *Maid-Servants*, have had no Share in it. This, in my Opinion, is a little hard upon that Part of the Congregation. But does the Word of God lay this Hardſhip upon them? Is the Election of Paſtors, by the Scripture-Rule limited to Communicants? Or, if not to *them*, is it to the *Males*, the *Houſholders*, or *Subſcribers?* Where do we read any thing like *that?*—— And as this Method of Election is not preſcribed or countenanced in God's Book, ſo neither is it agreeable to your *own* Principles, as they are taught and maintained in your *own* Books. For as they ſtand *there*, every one is to have the Choice of his Paſtor, who has a Soul to be committed to his Charge. And have not *theſe* Souls, as well as their *Huſbands*, their *Fathers*, or their *Maſters?* And as *theſe* are by far the greater Number, were they allowed to have any Part in the Election, and to act *freely* in it, the Majority of Voices, 'tis poſſible, might go another way.——

Well! the Election is now over; and how few can properly be ſaid to have a Paſtor of *their own chuſing?* The far greater Part of the Congregation, nine in ten, or nineteen in twenty, as the Caſe may happen, had no Share in it; and of thoſe who had, very nigh half, it may be, have a Paſtor *forced* upon them by the reſt, one too, whom they did not only *not chuſe*, but have been *ſtruggling againſt*, and doing all they could to *ſet aſide*. And if theſe ſhould be ſo untractable and ſelf-willed, as to think of ſplitting the Congregation, in Favour of the Gentleman they would have had, (which has been ſometimes done, and, as one would think, upon your Principles, not a Word could be ſaid againſt it) they ſhall be ſure to hear in both Ears of the *Carnality of Religious Contention*, and of the *heinous Sin of cauſing Schiſms in the Church*, and that they ought to be concluded by the Majority; which *upon your Principles*, pardon me, good Sir, is juſt ſuch Nonſenſe, as if it were ſaid, that, if the major Part were to chuſe a Lawyer or Phyſician for the Congregation, the Minority ought to acquieſce in their Choice, and hold themſelves bound to make uſe of *him*, and of no other.

But let all this paſs; and let us ſuppoſe he was *duly*, that is to ſay, *unanimouſly* choſen, and that not only by thoſe that are commonly eſteemed the rightful Electors, but by the whole Congregation that are of Age and Ability to judge, in ſome reaſonable manner, whom they had beſt commit the Care of their Souls to. And we will ſuppoſe he lives among them (for that is a common Caſe) Twenty, Thirty, or Forty Years. But then, alas! *One Generation cometh, and another goeth away*; and by this time, all his Electors, or very nigh all, may be in their Graves. What is it now that conſtitutes the Relation between *him* and his *preſent* People;

and

and makes him a Paſtor to them, more truly than the Pariſh Miniſter is to others that are conformable, and would be to *them*, if they would only pleaſe to go to Church, and duly attend on his Miniſtrations. He is, plainly, no Paſtor of *theirs*; for he is no Paſtor of *their chuſing*. He might be a Paſtor to their Anceſtors, or to their Predeceſſors in their Farms, or Shops. But what is that to *them*? Theſe have no more Right to impoſe a Paſtor upon all that come after them, than any Patron has to impoſe one upon the preſent Inhabitants of the Pariſh. In fine, there is no way I can ſee, conſiſtently with your Principles, to make him related to *them* as *their* Paſtor, but his making once in a while a *formal Ceſſion* of his Meeting, and being then, if it ſhall ſo happen, *re-elected* into it.

In the next Place, Sir, I can't underſtand, how the Conſtitution of a Church by an *explicite* Covenant (the Conſtitution of many of your Churches) is reconciled with the Right of the People to chuſe their Paſtors, as they do their Lawyers or Phyſicians. Perhaps, you will ſay, this is very ſtrange; for is not their Covenanting with their Paſtors to walk with *them* in all Chriſtian Ordinances, according to God's Appointment, the very Uſe and Exerciſe of ſuch a Right? I agree to it. But then, Sir, I deſire to know, is not this Covenant underſtood to be, ordinarily, for Life? And do you chuſe your Lawyers or Phyſicians *ſo?* Do you chuſe *theſe* once for all, and bind yourſelves to them by a Covenant, in ſuch manner, that you can't leave them at pleaſure, and when you think you have Cauſe for it? When you have choſen your Paſtor, you may repent of it, and ſometimes, perhaps, have Reaſon good to do ſo. But your Choice is made; and you are not at liberty to join yourſelves to another, unleſs he, to whom you were joined before, ſhall re-

leaſe you. And this plainly appears from a little Book, entitled, *Heads of Agreement aſſented to by the United Miniſters in and about* London, *formerly called Preſbyterian and Congregational.* Where, Sir, be pleaſed to obſerve, they were formerly called Preſbyterian and Congregational, but were not thenceforward to be called ſo. For theſe [a] *two Sticks being made one*, they were neither Preſbyterian nor Congregational, but ſomething between both, tho' in truth, a great deal more Congregational than Preſbyterian, the Preſbyterians having, in a manner, gone over, and given up their Principles for the ſake of Peace. I wiſh they would have done as much, they need not, I think, to have done more, in order to Peace and Union with the Church of *England.* But this only by the Way. Let us come to the Point we were upon. Say the united Miniſters, *A Viſible Profeſſor joined to a particular Church ought to continue ſtedfaſtly with the ſaid Church, and not forſake the Miniſtry and Ordinances there diſpenſed, without an orderly ſeeking a Recommendation unto another Church.* And if he attempt to join himſelf, without ſuch Recommendation, to another, he ought not to be received. *We ought not* (ſay they) *to admit any one to be a Member of our reſpective Congregations, that has joined himſelf to another, without Endeavours of mutual Satisfaction of the Congregations concerned.* It is not meant, as *you*, Sir, perhaps, in the Rectitude and Simplicity of *your* Heart, may imagine, that a Profeſſor joined, or in Communion with his Pariſh Church, *ought to continue ſtedfaſtly with the ſaid Church*, and not forſake *the Miniſtry and Ordinances there diſpenſed*, and that, if he offer to join himſelf

[a] A Sermon ſo entitled, preach'd by Mr. *Mead* before the united Miniſters on occaſion of their Union.

to

to a Diſſenting Congregation, he ought not to be there admitted, unleſs the Miniſter of the Pariſh be content and ſatisfied therewith. No, Sir; *Meo periculo*, I'll be anſwerable for them, that was none of their Meaning. His Pariſh Church he may leave, as he pleaſes, out of *Will*, or *Humour*, *Levity*, *Intereſt*, *Diſtaſte*, or any Motive whatever, and be readily received among *them* without aſking any Queſtions, without bringing, or ſeeking a Recommendation from his Pariſh Miniſter. But when he has left his Pariſh Church, and is once joined to any Diſſenting Congregation, then Sir, but not before, it is a *Sinful withdrawing*, if he depart from that Congregation without leave, or aſking leave, upon ſuch Motives. And whatever his Motives are, he cannot be received into any other Church, without a fair Recommendation from his former. They do indeed ſay, *Such Recommendation ought to be given, when the Caſe of the Perſon apparently requires it.* But who is to be Judge (he and his Church, you may be ſure, and nobody elſe) of that *Apparency?* And he, for his Part, one may eaſily ſuppoſe, is too much intereſted in the Greatneſs of his Congregation, to be over free of ſuch Favours. If one removes his Habitation to any great Diſtance, that is a Caſe that does *apparently* require it, and his Paſtor, as one would imagine, can't for ſhame, refuſe to diſmiſs him, and ſend him away in Peace. And yet, perchance, even in *this* Caſe, it may be held right, not to diſmiſs him *in haſte*, or perhaps, *at all*, if there be thought any juſt and reaſonable Exception to the Paſtor or Congregation, he is now betaking himſelf to. And in this Refuſal he is plainly countenanced, if not fully juſtified by Ch. 28. of *The Inſtitution of Churches and the Order appointed in them by Jeſus Chriſt*, where, after declaring the juſt Cauſes of any one's Departure, 'tis ſaid, he

he conſulting with the Church, or the Officer or Officers thereof, may peaceably depart from the Communion of the Church, wherewith he has walked to join himſelf with ſome other Church WHERE HE MAY ENJOY THE ORDINANCES IN THE PURITY OF THE SAME. A plain Intimation, that in caſe it be apprehended he cannot enjoy there all the Ordinances in their *Purity*, his Diſmiſſion may be juſtly refuſed. But as to the Plea of Diſtance of Habitation, if he ſtill reſide in any Part of *London*, or *Weſtminſter*, with their *Suburbs*, and the *Borough*, I doubt it will hardly, in any Caſe, be admitted. For in all likelihood, it will be ſaid, he may ſtill continue in the Communion of the Church whereunto he was joined, as hundreds are known to do from the moſt diſtant Parts of thoſe Places.—See, Sir, now, what Difficulties a Man may be brought into by this *unſcriptural Method*, this *crafty Invention* of a Church Covenant, how it deprives him of his Right, if not to chuſe *once*, yet to *diſmiſs* his Paſtor, when he ſees a Cauſe, and that, under the *Shew of Liberty*, it holds him in *real Bondage*.

Sometimes, Sir, it happens that Gentlemen of your Perſuaſion are poſſeſſed of the Advowſons of Benefices appendant to their Manors, or Eſtates. How do they act, in the Diſpoſal of them, on any Vacancy? If they would act conſcientiouſly, according to their Principles, they can do no other than leave the Matter to the Pariſh, preſenting ſuch Clerk as the Pariſhioners ſhall chuſe, or nominate. But I have not heard of any Inſtances of this Proceeding. I ſuppoſe they do, upon ſuch Occaſions, like ſome other Patrons regarding private and perſonal Conſiderations, more than the *real good*, or (which, at leaſt, we ought to expect from *them*) the *Fancies* and *Inclinations* of the People. I know, not, Sir, whether you are a Patron, having never been,

been, as you may gueſs, mightily inquiſitive after thoſe Matters. But a Relation of yours, as you very well know, has the alternate Right of Preſentation to a Rectory in your Neighbourhood, and when he diſpoſed of it the laſt time it fell into his Hands, he never *conſulted*, or *minded* the Pariſhioners, but preſented a Gentleman *after his own liking*; and you are not ignorant of the general Diſcontent of the Pariſhioners, thereat, and how much, then, they regretted the loſs of their late Miniſter. And from the few Inſtances I have heard of, I am apt to think, it would, upon a particular Enquiry, be found, that ſuch Clergymen as have been preſented by Diſſenters, are generally leſs, but, to be ſure, not more acceptable to their Pariſhioners, than others.

But their moſt ſcandalous Contravention to their own Principles is in the Choice of City Lecturers, where they are ſometimes ſeen as buſy as other People, collecting and muſtering their Forces in behalf of a Gentleman whom *they know not*, nor *ever intend to hear*, and *care not a chip for*, and ſtriving by the weight of *their* Suffrages, to turn the Election in *his* Favour, and ſo *force* him upon the Pariſh, *againſt the liking*, as it may happen, of the *far greater Part* of his Auditors. This is not very modeſt, no more than it would be in the Members of our Church to be ſeen thronging to a Meeting, to Vote in the Election of your Miniſters. But ſetting aſide the Immodeſty of the thing; it is ſuch an open, direct, immediate, bare-faced Contradiction to their avowed Principles, as Diſſenters, that one would think it can't but be perceived by the meaneſt, or moſt unattentive of them, and muſt be accompanied with the Condemnation of their own Hearts. Their Miniſters teach them, and they, doubtleſs, believe, that the Salvation of Men ſo much

much depends upon their liking of their Paſtor, that he ought to be of their own chuſing. Yet *will* they, if it be poſſible, *impoſe* Paſtors upon *our* People, *againſt their Liking* and Inclination, as if they meant to hinder their Salvation. I wiſh their Miniſters would be pleaſed to teach them better, and admoniſh them not to intereſt themſelves on theſe Occaſions, but to walk more *charitably* towards *us*, as well as act more *conſiſtently* with *themſelves*. Permit me to tell thoſe Gentlemen it would become them, and be much for their Credit to do ſo. We ſhould *then* ſay, *This is fair! This is honeſt! This is conſiſtent!* But if, inſtead of this, they let them *go on*, if not *encourage* them to *ſtickle* in theſe Affairs, they may be thought, perhaps, more attentive to their *little Deſigns*, and *Party-Views*, than to their *Principles*. In fine, if this Practice continues, I am humbly of Opinion, it ought to be, by Law and Authority, prevented, by taking away a Right (if any they have) prejudicial to the Church of *England*, and no way *Valuable*, but rather *Injurious* to themſelves, inaſmuch as they cannot make *conſcientiouſly*, any uſe of it.

Near a-kin with the foregoing there is another Reaſon many of you have for their Separation (but whether this, Sir, be one of yours, I am not certain) to wit, *purer Ordinances*, and *better Edification*. The public Worſhip of the eſtabliſh'd Church and the Inſtructions there given, are not, it ſeems, ſo *pure* and ſo *edifying*, as thoſe they find at Meeting. And they hold themſelves not only *at Liberty*, but indeed *bound*, to chuſe the *pureſt Ordinances*, and to ſit down under that *Preaching*, by which they think they can *moſt profit*. Of thoſe who leave the Communion of the Church for the Meeting on any *Religious* Account or Pretence, (for you muſt, Sir, be

be ſenſible, ſome do it for *Intereſt*, or out of *Pique* and *Diſtaſte*, and other Motives equally corrupt) I am well ſatisfied there is hardly one in twenty, but do it, and will own they do it, *chiefly*, if not *ſolely*, upon this Account. They have no ſcruples about the Lawfulneſs of our Communion, at leaſt *at the Time of their leaving us*, whatever they may come to have *afterwards*, through the Induſtry of their new Paſtors, and the conſtant Converſation of their new Friends, who will, doubtleſs, omit no Opportunity to ſow, and carefully cultivate in their Minds, the ſame Scruples and Prejudices they themſelves are poſſeſſed with. And of thoſe who have *always* been in the diſſenting Way, I am convinced there are not a few (divers there are, to my Knowledge) who will freely own *they have nothing to ſay againſt the Church*, but that 'tis only for *better Teaching*, that they do as they do, and continue in the Way they were put into. And they apprehend it is their Duty to do ſo. This is what they ſay, and your Miniſters ſeem to approve and *praiſe their Saying*. They ſeem to be unanimous in *this*, that 'tis *Right* to ſeparate for *greater Purity of Worſhip*; and I don't perceive they deny, but are willing enough to have it thought, that 'tis alſo *right* to ſeparate for *more edifying Preaching*. *Edifying*, ſays [a] one of them, *is generally uſed for Inſtructing and Teaching; and a Man is edified, when he improves in Spiritual Knowledge, in Faith, in Love to God and Men. And this being* (continues he, and, doubtleſs, agreeably to the Sentiments of the reſt) *the greateſt thing a Chriſtian has to look after, he is* bound *to uſe thoſe means he finds moſt conducive thereunto.* This is true or falſe, *according as it is taken.* If it be taken to mean, that a Chriſtian is *bound*, in Love and Juſtice to his

[a] Remarks on Dr. *Wells*'s Letter, &c. p. 34.

own Soul, to follow, and conſtantly adhere to ſuch Teacher, as he apprehends to preach *moſt Edifyingly*, ſo far as he *may*, conſiſtently with the Peace and common Edification of the Church of God, and the Duty he owes to it, this, I think, may be admitted as true and inconteſtable: But if it be taken to mean, as it muſt mean to be pertinent to *his* Purpoſe, that he is *bound* to adhere to ſuch Teacher for his own private Edification, and to follow him beyond the Pale of the Church, and at the Expence of its Edification, Unity, and Peace, nothing can be falſer; and I may add, too, more *abſurd*, becauſe it ſuppoſes, that by means of committing a Sin, and ſtaining his Soul with Guilt, he is edified and improved in Faith and Holineſs. And the Plea it contains for Separation is ſuch, as none would make who have any Notion of a Church, and of *one* Church, or the leaſt Senſe of any Obligation Chriſtians are under to preſerve the Unity thereof.

We find, Sir, every now and then, your Miniſters valuing themſelves for being the *Children and Followers* of the old *Puritans*. I wiſh to God that they were. We ſhould not then ſee them, as now we do, juſtifying and encouraging Separation, upon the ſole Account of *leſs defective Ways of Worſhip*, and *more edifying Preaching*. For ſo did *not* the old *Puritans*. If they were really *their* Children, and Inheritors of *their* Principles, we ſhould have them daily, if not in our Pulpits, yet in our Churches, and their People following their Examples. And if there were any obſtinately continuing in their Separation, we might expect to ſee [a] *The Unreaſonableneſs of Seperation*, *Separation ſelf-condemned*, *A friendly Trial of the Grounds of Separation*,

[a] Titles of Books written by the old Nonconformiſts againſt the Separatiſts of thoſe Times.

A grave

A grave and modeſt Confutation of the Separatiſts, and the *Arraignment of Schiſm*, flowing from *their* Pens, as well as from thoſe of their pretended Anceſtors. To be plain, Sir, they miſtake their Family: It is not ſo good as they imagine. If they had *any Forefathers* among *us*, they muſt be the old *Browniſts* [b], not the *Puritans*, their great Adverſaries and Opponents. The *Browniſts* were *real Separatiſts*, but theſe *not*. Therefore *they* are their Fathers; and I am ſorry to ſay it, they even ſeem to have degenerated from *them*, in Point of Looſeneſs of Principle about Church-Communion. The *Browniſts* ſeparated themſelves from the Church, becauſe it ſeems, in their Opinions, it had not the *Eſſence*, and, as the Word is, *the conſtitutive Form* of a Church. Give them a Church rightly, in their Minds, formed and conſtituted, and there is Reaſon to think they would not have ſeparated from it, merely on ſuch Accounts as we are now ſpeaking of. Will you pleaſe, Sir, to hear what they ſay in their Apology N. 36. *None are to ſeparate for Faults and Corruptions, which may and will fall out among Men, even in true conſtituted Churches, but by due Order to ſeek the Redreſs thereof.* And if not for Faults and Corruptions, then not, ſurely, for mere *Defects not eſſential*, or for a *greater Purity of Adminiſtrations*,

[b] *Baylie* in his Diſſuaſive from the Errors of the time, p. 53. calls the Independents, the Separatiſts Offspring. "Concerning "their Original (ſays he) the Separatiſts were their Fathers. "This is demonſtrable, not only by the Conſanguinity of their "Tenents, the one having borrowed all their chief Doctrines and "Practices from the other, but alſo by deduction of their Pede-"gree in this clear Line. Maſter *Robinſon* did derive his Way "to his ſeparate Congregation at *Leyden*; a part of them did carry "it over to *Plymouth* in *New England*; here, Maſter *Cotton* did "take it up, and tranſmit it from thence to Maſter *Thomas Good-"win*, who did help to propagate it to ſundry others in *Old "England* firſt, and after, to more in *Holland*, 'till now by many "Hands it is ſown thick in divers Parts of this Kingdom."

and leſs ſtill, I think, for the *Want of the moſt excellent and edifying Preaching.*

It is not, Sir, very eaſy to underſtand what it is that your Friends mean by *leſs defective Ways of Worſhip*, and *purer Adminiſtrations* than thoſe in the Church of *England*. As to Defects in our Worſhip, Have we dropp'd or mutilated any Ordinance of God? Have we not publick Prayers and Supplications to him for all needful Things? Do we not celebrate his Praiſes? Do we not read publickly the Holy Scriptures? Is not his pure Word preach'd? And the Sacraments, are they not duly adminiſtred among us? If any Goſpel-Ordinance be wanting, let *them*, or will you, Sir, be pleaſed to name it.—And as to *Purity of Ordinances*, I know not what it ſhould be, or conſiſt in, beſides *a Conformity to the Inſtitution*. And pray tell me, which of the Ordinances of the Goſpel are here adminiſtred, in any ſuch manner unconformable to, and diſagreeing with the Inſtitution, as can, in the leaſt, hinder and obſtruct the Virtue and Efficacy thereof. I do indeed ſuſpect you eſtimate the *Purity* of Ordinances and Churches, by the *Paucity* of Rites and Ceremonies received into them, and hold thoſe pureſt that have none at all. By which Rule, your Churches (if you have no Ceremonies, which, perhaps, at ſome other Time I ſhall inquire into) muſt be eſteemed purer than the Apoſtolical, which had certainly *ſome*, ſuch as, *the Kiſs of Peace*, *uncovering the Heads of the Men* in divine Offices, in token of the *natural Superiority of that Sex*, and *veiling thoſe of the Women*, in token of *their Subjection and Subordination to it*.

Suppoſing, however, ſome *Defects not eſſential*, ſomething *wanting* in our Church, that would be expedient and uſeful, or ſomething *in* it, not ſo well ordered as could be wiſhed, I am very ſure that

neither

neither our bleſſed Saviour, nor his Evangeliſts, or Apoſtles, *Peter*, *Paul*, *James*, or *John*, ever taught you, it was your Duty to renounce Communion with the Church on thoſe Accounts. St. *Paul*, particularly, when he had Occaſion, in his Epiſtles, to take Notice of ſome conſiderable Irregularities and Abuſes which had crept into the Diſcipline and Worſhip of the Churches he writes to, gives no Injunction or Command, nor ſo much as drops the leaſt Intimation of its being the Duty of all who would be accounted faithful, to ſet up ſeparate and *leſs defective Ways of Worſhip*, and to form themſelves into diſtinct and oppoſite Communions upon that footing. Hence I think it is pretty plain, he had no Thought of *the great Duty of Separation* upon Account of *greater Purity*, or *leſs defective Ways of Worſhip*. Nor let it be ſaid, we ourſelves own the Truth and Juſtneſs of this Principle, by our own ſeparating, *for greater Purity of Worſhip*, from *the Church of* Rome. Not, Sir, for *greater Purity*, properly ſpeaking, but for *Purity abſolutely conſidered*. The Worſhip of that Church is groſſly idolatrous, and, therefore, *quite impure*, and *downright ſinful*; and when *ours* comes to be *ſo*, I will freely allow you to go out from it, and do hereby engage to go out of it too, myſelf, in Company with you.

As to *more edifying Preaching*, we are not ignorant what is *theirs*, and what *ours* is. But of this I will ſay no more; though we might ſay, too, after the Apoſtle, very juſtly, *ſeeing that many glory after the Fleſh, we will glory alſo*. I will allow *theirs* to be as edifying as they pleaſe, ſince St. *Paul* does not allow *that* to be a good Plea for your Separation. Let any one think otherwiſe, if he can, when he reads and conſiders theſe Words of his to the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* iii. 4. *While one ſaith, I am of* Paul, *and another, I am of* Apollos, *are ye*

not

not carnal? Who then is Paul, *and who is* Apollos, *but Miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man. I have planted,* Apollos *watered: But God gave the Increaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the Increaſe.* Here is a ſharp and ſevere Cenſure of their magnifying, and being puffed up for one Teacher againſt another, and *that*, tho' he himſelf was one of the Parties ſo magnified, and though, too, there was no actual Separation of the other, with his Adherents in point of Church Communion. And here we have, too, ſtrong Reaſoning and convincing Argument againſt it. "Who am I, ſays he in effect, or who that *Apollos* whom ſome of you ſo extol, as if he had led you further, and given you a deeper Inſight into the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and *edified you more*, than I have done. We are but Servants and Inſtruments, by whom the Doctrine of the Goſpel has been convey'd to you, whoſe Gifts, being from God alone, do not afford you the leaſt ground to attribute any thing to your Teachers. I planted the Goſpel among you; *Apollos* came after, and watered it. What then? Nothing from hence can be aſcribed to either of us. Neither he, nor I have any Power to make it take Root, and grow in your Hearts. Our Gifts, whether great or ſmall, in this reſpect are as nothing, but the Growth and Encreaſe is owing to God alone, and to his Bleſſing upon his Ordinance." Is this talking now like one who held it the Duty of every Chriſtian to follow, though it were into actual and open Schiſm, ſuch Teacher as he judges the moſt excellent and edifying? No, Sir, he was far from inculcating any ſuch Church-dividing, and Church-deſtroying Principle; for ſuch it plainly is; and as it has been exceedingly hurtful to *our* Church, ſo, e'er this, it would have *utterly confounded your*

Churches

Churches, if your People had conſtantly purſued, and acted, in all things in Conſiſtency with it, and your Miniſters had not taken (of which more by and by) *wiſe Meaſures* and *prudent Precautions* to prevent its operating among *you*, in ſo deſtructive a manner.

To make it appear, that your People *are not true to this Principle*, and act, in many Things, inconſiſtently with it, let it be remembred what it is. *That every Chriſtian is bound to adhere to that way of Worſhip which is leaſt defective, and to that Teacher whom he judges moſt edifying*, is the Principle. Do they, now, follow this Principle in all Things? Few of them do, any further than while they have ſeparated themſelves from the Church of *England*, by the help of it. When that is done, they lay it aſide as uſeleſs, or as Dangerous in the Uſe.

In ſaying, as you do, you only chuſe, as it is your Duty, *the leaſt defective Way of Worſhip*, you plainly confeſs there are ſome Defects in *your own* Way, as well as *ours*, though not ſo *great*, or *many*. Now for the ſame Reaſon that you are *bound* to chuſe *a leſs defective Way of Worſhip*, you are, certainly, *bound to chuſe one that has no Defects at all*. True, you will ſay, but ſuch an one is hardly to be found. I believe ſo too: That is, certainly, the very Truth of the Caſe. But if ſuch a Church is, at preſent, no where to be *found*, might it not be *formed?* Why ſhould not you, Sir, and ſuch others as are ſenſible of Defects in your own Churches, divide yourſelves from the reſt who are fond of continuing them, and gathering together from all Parts, if there are not enough for the Purpoſe iſſuing out of each Congregation, form yourſelves into a Church which ſhall be free from thoſe Defects at leaſt, if not from all other? And if all cannot agree in any one Form or Method of Divine Worſhip that ſhall be thought *without Defect*, you may *ſubdivide* again

and

and again, and *all who are like minded in every Thing* make up a *little* Flock, to worſhip God in their own Way. I know, it will be ſaid, "This is quite "Ridiculous and Abſurd! This would be very In-"convenient, and tends to endleſs Confuſion! "This would be doing like a certain *New England* "Miniſter, of whom the Story goes, that he could "not bear the Defects of their Worſhip *there*, and "therefore *forſook* it, turned a kind of *Seeker*, and "at laſt could not find (good Man!) any Church "upon Earth purified enough for him to communi-"cate withal." Well, that Gentleman may be ridiculed; but, for all that, he was, *a perfectly conſiſtent Proteſtant Diſſenter:* He did but act *the true practical Part* of his own Principle; and his Brethren *in Old England* muſt do the ſame, or elſe renounce the Principle upon which the Church of *England* is forſaken.

Thus, (for Example) in ſome of your Churches, the Miniſter *uſes the Lord's Prayer*; in others, *not:* Moſt of you, 'tis like, approve of Singing *David's Pſalms*, but ſome may be poſſeſſed with Scruples, and think[a] the *Sectarian Objections*, which Mr. *Baxter* ſpeaks of, againſt Singing them, of great Weight, at leaſt 'till they are *Chriſtianized*, in ſome ſuch way as is done by Dr. *Watts*, and made more ſuitable to the Goſpel-State: In ſome again, I ſuppoſe, they are ſung, the firſt Line only being rehearſed aloud, the Congregation going on, of themſelves, with the reſt; in others, it is repeated Line by Line. Now, conſidering that it is not the Harmony of your Sentiments and Principles about theſe Matters, but mere Proximity of Habitation, eſpecially in the Country, that brings you together to the ſame Meeting, it would be very *marvellous*, if it ſhould fall out, that

[a] Caſes of Conſcience, *Queſt.* 124.

all, in every Place, whoſe Lot it is to have their Habitations in the ſame Pariſh or Neighbourhood, and who, therefore, aſſemble together, ſhould have the ſame Sentiments concerning theſe Things. As you are well known to think differently about them, one Part, a greater or a leſs, in every Congregation, may be fairly ſuppoſed to think, that the repeating the Pſalm *Line by Line* is a *Defect*, as it interrupts and ſpoils the Harmony; another Part, particularly thoſe that have not Pſalm Books, or cannot read, muſt ſurely think, the not repeating it ſo is more than a *Defect*, *a real Corruption*, as it keeps them from *knowing* what is ſung, and *joining* in it, and is, therefore, contrary to Edification. And as to the Lord's Prayer, one Part of the Congregation is likely to think, the Miniſters not uſing it, is a Slight and Diſreſpect to it, and the other, that it too much *countenances* Forms of Prayer, and tends to the *quenching of the Spirit*. And yet we find, theſe Defects and Corruptions notwithſtanding, you keep together, and have no Thought of ſeparating, and ſetting up *a leſs defective Way of Worſhip*; which, to be true to your Principles, any Child can ſee you ought to do.

There is as little Reaſon to believe that your Friends do, generally, follow what they think *the moſt Excellent and Edifying Preaching*, as that they, generally, adhere to what they eſteem *the leaſt defective Way of Worſhip*. In the City, I gueſs, they are moſtly determined to embrace the Miniſtry of *this* or *that* Gentleman, by their *Perſonal Knowledge* of, *Friendſhip* with, or *Relation* to him, ſome particular *Views and Intereſts*, *Nearneſs of Habitation* to his Meeting, and other Conſiderations of the like Nature. And though, now and then, they may be diſpoſed to follow the Preaching of ſome other Miniſter of more Excellent Gifts, and admired Quali-

fications, yet they content themſelves to ſit down, ordinarily, under the Miniſtry of *their own*. And, indeed, if it were otherwiſe, I am ready to think, there would be ſome half a Dozen, or ſuch a number of Meetings, where the People would be throng'd to Death, while the reſt would remain almoſt empty. Look into the Country, and there it will be plain, there are few or none but go to the neareſt and moſt convenient Meeting. But now, is it likely that all the Members of each Congregation, or the Bulk and Generality of them, do in their Conſciences think their own Paſtor more Edifying than any they know elſewhere? It would be a mighty Chance, and indeed a Miracle, if it were ſo. No doubt of it, there will be in the Neighbourhood, in one Place or other, whither they may reſort every Lord's Day, ſome other Miniſter, whom great numbers of them can't but confeſs to be more Edifying than he who is now their Paſtor. And if there be, they will be obliged, I think, by their Principle, *of the Duty of following the moſt Edifying Preacher*, to reſort, ordinarily, to *him*. Or ſuppoſe, in their Neighbourhood, there be none eſteemed better than their own, yet if in their Journeys any whither, or when they have had Occaſion to repair to *the famous City of* London, they have chanced to find, among *the learned Divines there*, ſuch an one, in compariſon with whom their own Country Miniſter ſhall be, perhaps, eſteemed Nobody, I don't ſee how they can be excuſed from removing their Habitations into the City, or near it, that they may have the Benefit of his Miniſtry. This, I own, may be ſomewhat inconvenient and prejudicial to them in their Worldly Concerns; but no matter for *that*. It is not fit that leaving a good Farm, or well accuſtomed Shop, or forſaking either Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, ſhould

be

be put in Ballance againſt the *Edification* and *Salvation* of their Souls. And if, for their own private and particular Edification, they can diſpenſe with themſelves to *diſturb the Peace of the Church*, and *tear it in Pieces*, I think they may well ſubmit to ſome Temporal Inconvenience, on the ſame good Account.

It was intimated before, that your Miniſters have taken ſome *wiſe Meaſures and Precautions* to hinder the Operation of *this* Principle to their *own* hurt. This is done by the Covenant before-mentioned, which your Independents, or Congregational Men, bring their People into, to receive *them* for their Paſtors, and to walk conſtantly with *them* in Chriſtian Ordinances. I ſometimes wonder within myſelf, that their People, who have ſo deeply imbibed this Notion, that their Salvation ſo much depends upon their having *the moſt Edifying Teaching*, ſhould be ſo unreflecting and inconſiderate, as to ſuffer themſelves to be drawn into any Engagements of this Sort, and to pin themſelves down, perhaps for Life, to the Miniſtry of any one whatever. They ſhould have conſidered, there is a good deal of *Delicacy and Faſtidiouſneſs* in their *Taſte* of Preaching; and, therefore, that they could not be ſure, that, *the firſt Reliſh being over*, he will appear to *them* as Edifying as he does *now*; or, however, that there is, in moſt, ſuch a Fickleneſs and Inclination to change, that they cannot be certain they ſhall like *any*, very long. And if they were ſure they ſhould always like him as well as they do at preſent, they cannot be ſure, but ſome other Miniſter may be found, or come into the Country, before long, whom they may like ſtill better, and think more Edifying than *he*, and that they may then have upon their Spirits a ſtrong Impulſe, and irreſiſtible Incitation to put themſelves under his Miniſtry,

when they can't do it. They may humbly pray to be diſmiſſed, averring and proteſting, they have found a Gentleman by whom they can profit more, as poſſibly they may twenty, one after another; for, as [a] Mr. *Baxter* obſerves, *there may be twenty Miniſters, one abler than another in their ſeveral Degrees*; to ſay nothing of the *Humours* and *Caprices* of Men, which will make the Difference between them appear ſtill greater. I ſay, they may pray and plead for Diſmiſſion, but their Plea is not like to be admitted. They will, probably, be told, it is not allowed to be good, in the Churches; and be referr'd for this to *The Inſtitution and the Orders appointed in them by* Jeſus Chriſt, where Sect. 28. they will read thus, ——*Perſons that are joined in Church Fellowſhip ought not lightly, or without juſt Cauſe, to withdraw themſelves from the Communion of the Church, whereunto they are ſo joined*; and then, the juſt and weighty Cauſes for withdrawing, allowed to be ſuch in their Churches, are thus enumerated. *Nevertheleſs, where any Perſon cannot continue in any Church without his Sin, either for want of the Adminiſtration of any Ordinance inſtituted by* Chriſt, *or by his being deprived of his due Privileges, or compelled to any thing in Practice not warranted by the Word, or in Caſe of Perſecution, or upon the Account of Conveniency of Habitation, he, conſulting with the Church or the Officer or Officers thereof, may peaceably depart.* —Here, Sir, you ſee, and *they*, doubtleſs, will be bid to obſerve, is not a Syllable concerning departing, or being diſmiſſed, *for better Edification.* And as that is a Caſe more likely to happen, and which, doubtleſs, does happen ten times oftener than any of thoſe that *are* mentioned, we may be ſure it would have been mentioned, and the ſame Indulgence of a peaceable

[a] Defence of the Cure, Part I. Page 85.

Departure

Departure would have been allowed in this as in the other Caſes, if the Reaſon for it had been eſteemed ſufficient. And then, in order to terrify them, they will, without Queſtion, be put in Mind of the Covenant of God, *which they entred into before him, and his Holy Angels, and is recorded on high*, to accept their preſent Paſtors, and to walk with them in ſubjection to *Chriſt*'s Appointment, and what a *Sin* it would be, if, from their own *Fancy*, *Will*, or *Humour*, they ſhould *break their Bond*, and *leave their Place*. But to make them eaſy, they will, probably, be told, in Concluſion, and earneſtly deſired to conſider, that the Benefit of Sermons does not ſolely, or chiefly, depend upon the Gifts and Accompliſhments of the Preacher, but on the good Diſpoſitions of the Hearers, and the Bleſſing of God, that, under the Miniſtry of their preſent Paſtors, nothing is wanting that is requiſite to bring them to Salvation, and if they believe *that*, they *may* and *ought* to be content, in Conſideration of the Peace and Quiet, which all good Chriſtians ought to ſeek, and have a tender Regard to, and, indeed, to the very Being of the Churches, which muſt be diſſolved and broken in Pieces, if all were to follow their Examples, and every Man to run from Miniſter to Miniſter, Church to Church, to find out, or under Pretext of having found out, better Means of Edification. This Doctrine is very likely to be delivered, and earneſtly inculcated, on ſuch Occaſions; and, if it were rightly applied, is true, however unſeemly it may appear in the Mouth of a Diſſenting Miniſter, who has been, perchance, at proper Times and Places, continually countenancing and encouraging, if not openly teaching, a quite contrary one, and owes, it may be, no inconſiderable Part of his Congregation and Income to the Impreſſions made by it.

However,

However, ſuppoſe the *general Plea* of better Edification ſhould be allowed good; there may, yet, be Reaſon for not admitting it *in any particular Caſe that may happen.* Let it be remembered, as was obſerved above, that any Church Member is to be peaceably diſmiſſed, *when the Caſe of the Perſon apparently requires it*; and put, then, the Caſe, that the Queſtion is, whether a Member of Dr. *Guiſe*'s Congregation (for Example) ſhall be allowed to depart, for better Edification, to Mr. *Chandler*'s, or *vice verſa*, one of Mr. *Chandler*'s to Dr. *Guiſe*'s. Now it may not be apparent to either of thoſe Miniſters, as it is to be before he is diſmiſſed, that this Perſon *can edify better* under the Miniſtry of the other. Dr. *Guiſe* may think it even *impoſſible* he ſhould profit more under Mr. *Chandler*'s, and Mr. *Chandler* think it *equally impoſſible* he ſhould be *better edified* and inſtructed under Dr. *Guiſe*'s Miniſtry, and *his Manner of Preaching Chriſt*, than his own. This Suppoſition will hardly be thought unreaſonable by any one, into whoſe Hands the Books of theſe two Gentlemen againſt each other concerning *the true Manner of Preaching Chriſt* ſhall happen to fall. And what is ſuppoſed of theſe two, may be as well ſuppoſed of any other two, who may adhere as obſtinately to their reſpective Notions, and be as much divided in their Opinions and Sentiments about the Subject of *this* Controverſy, as *they* were. And then if either *cannot*, or *will not* be ſatisfied, that any of their People may be better edified by the other, they muſt be content, for what I can ſee, to keep to their preſent Paſtor, reconcile themſelves to him, and make the beſt Uſe they can of ſuch Inſtructions as he is able to give them.

I will put an End to this tedious Argument, with briefly relating an Affair touching the Subject we are now upon, between a late Diſſenting Miniſter,

and

and one of the Members of his Congregation. And though the Affair be *perſonal*, yet as it is *public*, and has been many Years in *Print*, and both Parties are now, in all Probability, dead and gone, I hope I may do it without diſpleaſing. The Gentleman, Sir, was Dr. *Williams*, he, who by his Writings againſt the pernicious Principles of the *Antinomians*, which with great Violence and Impetuoſity were breaking in upon your Churches, reclaimed many, and gained to himſelf thereby much Credit; which, though it may ſeem a Deviation from the Matter in hand to mention, I was willing to take notice of, that it may appear to you, I am always diſpoſed to give them their Due, and ready to acknowledge whatever Service they ſhall render to the Church of God. The Lady was a Widow, who had been ſolemnly joined to his Congregation by this Covenant; but upon ſome account or other, no matter what, became weary of his Miniſtry, and had a great Deſire to join herſelf to Mr. *Shower*'s Congregation. And by ſome Expreſſions in his Letter to her, ſuch as *her grieving his Spirit, deſpiſing her Paſtor, and weakening his Hands*, it ſhould ſeem her Departure was *for the ſake*, or *under the Pretence of better Edification*. But was this allowed a ſufficient Ground for a Departure? Far from it. It is declared to be *ſlight, ſuch as* Chriſt *has no where allowed, ſuch as no ſober Chriſtian ever leaves his Paſtor upon, and ſhe could have no Pleaſure in, upon a Death-bed, or at the Bar of* Chriſt. He calls it her *Sin, which he, in real Friendſhip to her, would prevent*, and gives her to underſtand, *he ſhould not omit public Proceedings, if ſhe was not reclaimed to her Duty, and that he was ſure, were he to give Notice of her Separation, none would admit her to the Lord's Table, 'till ſhe could prove her Reaſons valid*. All the Uſe I am to make of this Narrative is only to

ſhew,

ſhew, by a remarkable Example, that the Plea of more edifying Teaching for Separation is not accounted good by your own Miniſters *among themſelves*; unleſs I ſhould further remark their Partiality (for I am loth to call it by any worſe Name) when a Departure from one of their Churches to another, tho' it be for better Edification, is made ſo mighty a Matter, and ſo terrible a Sin, while a Departure from the eſtabliſhed Church to any one of their Churches is reckoned none at all, but rather indeed a Matter of ſecret Joy and Exultation, even tho', too, it be notoriouſly known, that ſuch a Departure was made for ſome *worldly Intereſt*, or from *Pique* and *Diſtaſte*, or only from *Will* and *Wantonneſs*.——I go on now to ſome other Points in Difference between us.

In all the Writings, as well as Converſations, of your Friends, there is a mighty Cry againſt the *Impoſitions* of the Church, as they love to call them. Great is the *Magic* of Sounds and Words; and they are very ſenſible of this, as plainly appears by the Terms which they conſtantly affect to uſe to denote ſuch Things in the Church as they are pleaſed to diſlike. I omit all the reſt, with which I fancy I could fill a Page, and keep to that I have juſt now mentioned, to wit, *Eccleſiaſtical Impoſitions*. Theſe *Impoſitions* are only the *Laws*, *Injunctions*, or *Conſtitutions*, whereby the *Worſhip* and *Diſcipline* of our Church are regulated. And why then do we not hear as much of the Miſchief of *theſe*, as we do of the Miſchief of *Impoſitions?* Why, the Reaſon is plain. Thoſe Words have no *ill Idea* affix'd to them; and People would wonder where is the mighty *Miſchief* of *Laws*, *Conſtitutions*, and *Injunctions*; very *harmleſs* things, they would think, and what may be very *uſeful* and *expedient*, if the Governors of the Church have but Senſe enough to

judge of *Expediency* and *Uſefulneſs*. But *Impoſitions* is a Term of *ill Sound*, and has an *abhorred Idea* connected with it. And this is plainly the Reaſon that 'tis rung ſo continually in our Ears. And yet, after all, theſe *miſchievous Impoſitions* ſeem to be common to all Churches; nor can I frame to myſelf any Notion of a formed regular Society of Chriſtians, or of a worſhipping Aſſembly, without *Impoſitions* of one kind or other. And ſurely, *you*, Sir, have *yours*, as well as the Church *hers*, as you ſhall plainly ſee by what follows.

In ſeems as if *Law*, or *Canon*, or an *Injunction* from thoſe in Authority, ſome way or other ſignified, always enters into, and makes Part of a *Diſſenter's Idea* of an *Impoſition*; as tho' it were impoſſible there could be any ſuch thing, where any Practice or Uſage is not bound upon Miniſter, or People, one of theſe ways. But, ſurely, this is wrong, and there may be an *Impoſition*, at leaſt upon the People, by the *mere Will and Pleaſure* of the officiating Miniſter. And to make this plain to the meaneſt Underſtanding, I will ſuppoſe the whole Conſtitution of the *Church of England* was diſſolved, that the Clergy were releaſed from all Obligation to uſe the *Common Prayer*, and at full Liberty to modify the public Worſhip, each in his own Congregation, as he ſhould think fit, but that they, nevertheleſs, were ſtill of the Mind to uſe the Book of *Common Prayer* with all the *Rites and Ceremonies* thereof, juſt in the manner they now do. I would now aſk you, Sir, whether, in ſuch a Caſe, our *Impoſitions*, and your *Complaints* of them would be at an end, and ceaſe. I am ſure you would ſay, No; and that you of the Laity had, *now*, as much Reaſon for Complaint, as you had *before*, that indeed the Clergy *were* eaſed of all Impoſitions, by being left at Liberty to order the public Worſhip

their own Way, yet the old *Impoſitions* were ſtill continued, if not *by Law*, yet, *with equal Hardſhip*, by the *mere Will* of the Clergy, upon the People, every *Rite and Ceremony* of the *Liturgy*, being, *now*, to *them*, a Term of Communion, as much as ever, *excluding all whom* Chriſt *is ready to receive, from Communion, unleſs they ſubmit to it.* If this be the Caſe, as it evidently is, 'tis plain, that *Law* and *Authority* are not in the *Notion*, nor have any thing to do in the *Definition* of an *Impoſition*, and, conſequently, that there may be *real Impoſitions*, where no *Authority* inforces them, but only the *Will* and *Practice* of their Miniſters bind them upon the People. And if ſo, there may be, Sir, in your ſeparate Congregations, *Impoſitions*, as well as in the Eſtabliſh'd Church.—We will then ſee, if you pleaſe, in ſome Particulars, whether, as there *may* be, ſo there *are* not *actually* ſuch.

The Impoſition of ſet Forms of Prayer is one of the moſt grievous you complain of; when yet, at Bottom, you are not ſuch Enemies to it, as you ſeem to be. You know, the *Directory* was of *your own* impoſing, and was impoſed too, with much greater Rigour, than the *Common Prayer*, as may be ſeen in ſome of the Ordinances of Parliament for putting it in Execution. What Authority it has *now* among you, you beſt know. You hold it not, I ſuppoſe, at this time an *obliging* Rule; but you ſeem, generally, to eſteem it a very *good* one, and, I gueſs, are pretty much guided and *directed* by it. And we are told by Dr. *Calamy*, in his *Brief and true Account of Proteſtant Diſſenters in* England to his Divine in *Germany*, that the Examination and Ordination of Miniſters, in particular, is managed according to the Rules laid down in it. Now the *Directory* is really a kind of a *Form of Prayer*. For it not only *directs* Miniſters how they ſhall act and behave

behave in all the Parts and Offices of public Worſhip, but alſo ſuggeſts to them the very Matter and Subſtance of their Prayers and Exhortations, on every Occaſion, as well as furniſhes and puts into their Mouths juſt and ſuitable Expreſſions. And fain, Sir, would I ſee a Reaſon, why the eſtabliſhing of *that* ſhould not be eſteemed as much an *Impoſition*, as the injoining the uſe of the Common Prayer is.

After the Reſtoration, during the Memorable *Savoy Conference*, Mr. *Baxter*, that *ready Writer*, compiled, in a *few Weeks*, a *new Liturgy*, and with the other Commiſſioners on that ſide, preſented *an humble Petition* (for ſo, belike, it was called) that it might be received and *impoſed*, inſtead of the *Liturgy* we have. And thoſe who may be ſuppoſed to know the Minds of the ejected Miniſters perfectly well, ſeem not to doubt, but, in Caſe it had been *impoſed*, moſt of them would have ſubmitted to the *Impoſition*, and taken to it very kindly—See now, Sir, what their Pretences of *bearing their Teſtimony againſt all Impoſitions are come to!* And ſaid not I true, that they were not, in their Hearts, ſuch determined and irreconcileable Enemies to the *Impoſition* of ſet Forms of Prayer, as, ſometimes, they would appear to be? Let but a Form be of *their own deviſing*, and they will think it mighty right it ſhould be *impoſed* upon the People, and mighty reaſonable the People ſhould ſubmit to it.

But, indeed, praying in the extemporary way is really *impoſing* a Form of Prayer upon the Congregation. For ſuch a Prayer is really a Form to *them*, as much as the *Common Prayer* would be, the firſt time they ſhould be preſent at it. And if they conſider the Thing, they will eaſily perceive, it is as much a Form *the firſt Time* as it will be *ever after*. The only Difference is, *the firſt Time* it is a *New*

Form, and, *afterwards*, an *Old*. An extemporary Prayer, you'll ſay, is not impoſed upon the Miniſters. What then? 'Tis impoſed *by* the Miniſters; and that's worſe. Though, after all, I don't ſee how it can be otherwiſe, but that the People muſt have a Form *impoſed* upon them *by ſomebody*, unleſs they could all agree about a Form among themſelves, either once for all, or every time they meet together, and then deliver it to the Miniſter, to be, by him, preſented unto God. But then, do we not ſee, that, in this Caſe, *they* would *impoſe* it upon *him*? When all is done, 'tis impoſſible, in the Nature of Things, but that, in all public and ſocial Prayer, a ſet Form muſt be impoſed *by*, and *upon*, ſome or other. With *us*, indeed, it is impoſed *both upon Miniſter, and People*; with *you* upon the People only; and the Miniſters, the great Complainants of our Impoſitions, are, *themſelves*, the Impoſers. And while we have one conſtant and unvaried Form impoſed, which we can conſider and examine, and before we offer it up to God, approve of, which makes it in ſome Senſe our own, *you* have a thouſand Forms *impoſed* upon you, a new one, if it be really new, and your Miniſters do not cheat you every time you go to Meeting, one, too, which you have no time to examine, but muſt join in, let it be what it will, fitting or unfitting, the Moment it comes out of his Mouth.

I am aware, Sir, there is great talk among you in behalf of free Prayer, as you call it, that it ſecures Attention and Devotion, while Forms of Prayer produce Indifferency, Coldneſs, and Formality of Spirit. But I am not of your Mind in regard to either. If by Attention you mean a cloſe Application of the Mind to the Matter, or the Language of the Prayer, for Example, canvaſſing, examining, exerciſing the Judgment about the Fitneſs

neſs of it, watching for new Matter, or curious Expreſſion, ſtriving to retain and lay them up in your Memories, that you may afterwards review, or, perhaps, uſe them; *this ſort* of Attention I would not have ſecured, becauſe it is evidently a Hinderance to *another ſort of Attention*, which alone one would deſire to ſecure, *to wit*, a cloſe Application of the Mind *to praying*. For while the entire Attention of the Mind is taken up, and the whole Force of it ſpent and waſted in theſe curious Diſquiſitions, Enquiries and Speculations concerning the Matter or Phraſeology of the Prayer, there will be no room for any ſuch Act or Operation of it as praying is, no Poſſibility of ſpeaking the Prayer to God, of Perſonally offering up to, and preſenting before him the ſeveral Requeſts and Supplications of it. And as to Devotion, *that* is neither promoted by *all* free Prayer, nor hindred by *all* Forms. You muſt be ſenſible, Sir, and I think you muſt know from your own Experience, there are *ſome free Prayers* which will cauſe an Indifferency and Coldneſs of Spirit, if nothing worſe, at *firſt* hearing. And I can aſſure you, if you know it not already, there are *ſome Forms*, which one may uſe without *Indifferency and Coldneſs*, and indeed with a *lively Emotion of Spirit all one's Life long*. In the *antient Forms* of the Church, and therefore in *ours*, which are moſtly antient, there is a Strength, an Energy, a Savour, an Unction, I know not what to call it, not to be found in the Compoſition of modern Prayers, not even thoſe (begging the Pardon of the Compoſers) which are premeditated, and drawn up with Deliberation, and much leſs of others that are unpremeditated and extemporary. For Inſtance, the *Te Deum* of St. *Ambroſe*, which we, you know, have received into our *Liturgy*. For my own Part, I am not yet, after more than the thouſandth time

of

of uſing it, tired with it; and now, when I rehearſe it in the Church, am otherwiſe elevated and affected with the noble Simplicity thereof, than I am fully perſuaded I ever ſhould be with the moſt trim, polite, or ſpirited Orations of your popular and admired Miniſters, and much leſs with the *flatter* or *coarſer* ones of many others. I may alſo inſtance in divers other Parts of our daily Service, and in the whole of the Communion Office, which ſome of yourſelves have allow'd to be admirable, and I will venture to ſay none can uſe, though he had uſed it before ever ſo often, with any Formality or Deadneſs of Spirit, unleſs he has a Heart ſo frozen, and utterly eſtranged from all Devotion, as to be incapable of being wrought up to it by any means whatever.

If it were, Sir, in the Nature of a Form, as ſuch, to cauſe a Coldneſs and Indifferency in the Uſe of it, *all* Forms, thoſe of Divine as well as of Human Compoſition, and therefore the Lord's Prayer, would have that Effect. But will you preſume to fix *that* Imputation upon it? Or do you find, by your own Experience, it is liable to, and deſerves it? When your Miniſters uſe that Prayer, concluding their own with it (as ſome of them do) do you perceive your *Attention* begin to *ſlacken*, your *Devotion* to *abate*, and *Formality* to creep upon you, as ſoon as he enters upon it? I hope not. Indeed, I knew a Diſſenter, who, as ſoon as he perceived the Miniſter was concluding his own, and coming to the Lord's Prayer, was obſerved to be always feeling in his Pockets for his Pen, Ink, and Paper, and getting them ready to take down the Text and Sermon in Short-Hand-Writing. But this was a *voluntary* Coldneſs and Lukewarmneſs towards it, a *forced Diſreſpect* to it, for Example, I ſuppoſe, to the reſt, a *mere Affectation*, and I think I may take

take the Liberty to ſay, a very unbecoming one. Don't you think, Sir, that, if his Prejudices againſt the uſe of the Lord's Prayer, as a Prayer, had not hindered, he might have *attended*, to the end of it, with the ſame *Devotion* he did to the end of that of the Miniſter? Or do you think that he or you could not *now* read, or hear, or uſeo ther Scriptural Prayers and Confeſſions of Sin, ſuch as that of *Daniel* for his own Sin, and the Sin of his People, with the ſame *Attention* and *Devotion* you *once* could, when you had not read or heard it ſo often, as you now have? And when other Scriptures are read in your Meetings, as ſometimes, I ſuppoſe, they are, are they the leſs attended to, or are they heard with the leſs Devotion, by yourſelf, or others, for your having been converſant therein from your Youth, and now become familiarly acquainted with them? Or are thoſe Portions of Scripture with which you are leſs acquainted, more regarded, and reverently heard, and apt to affect you more, than ſuch Parts of it as are intimately and thoroughly known to you? And do you alſo find yourſelf, or are your Congregations generally obſerved to be more fervent and devout at the Prayers, than at the Pſalmody of the Church? I fancy, Sir, you will own, there is as great an *Appearance* of Devotion in *this*, as in *that* Part of your Worſhip, notwithſtanding *this* is carried on by well known Forms, ſuch as the People, generally, are, before-hand, acquainted with. And if your Miniſters found or thought it otherwiſe, ſurely they would provide, as they eaſily might, againſt that Inconvenience. It might eaſily be done, by making a vaſt Collection of Pſalms and Hymns, which ſhould be in their own keeping, and giving them out to be ſung every Lord's Day, or every time of your aſſembling, taking care, however, that no one of them ſhould come over again oftner

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than once in ſome Years, when it may be preſumed to be quite forgotten, and appear to the Congregation as new, as if it had been conceived that Morning. But as your Miniſters ſeem to have no thought of uſing this, or any other Expedient for preventing Indifferency and Formality in Singing, it may be fairly concluded they are not aware of any ſuch Danger, and have no Apprehenſion that *the continual treading one conſtant Road of Sentences, or track of Expreſſions* has, in Pſalmody, any conſiderable Aptneſs *to make your Spirits cold and flat, formal and indifferent in your Devotion.* And if they think it has *not*, in *Pſalmody*, I can ſee no reaſon why they ſhould think it *has*, in *Prayer*. Then again, I perceive they have no general Exception to precompoſed Forms in ſecret, or Family Devotion, nor yet in Prayer, or Grace, as we call it, before or after Meat, but do, themſelves, I preſume, when they ſit down to eat, generally uſe one and the ſame Form, or with little Variation of Expreſſion, though they are very ſenſible, that Prayer and Thankſgiving, on theſe Occaſions, is much apter to run into Formality, and to be performed with a Slightneſs and Indifferency of Spirit, than on any other whatſoever. And this mighty Zeal againſt Forms, in behalf of free and conceived Prayer, in the Pulpit, while they are ſo indifferent about them, on ſome other Occaſions, where there is greater Danger of Indifferency and Lukewarmneſs, would make one think, or at leaſt, ſuſpect, it is not ſo much for *increaſing* the *Devotion* as the *Numbers* of their People, for making a diſplay of their Gifts, and *ſo* drawing Diſciples after them.

Nor does it appear to me there is more Reaſon in that other Pretence, that the ſeveral Diſpenſations of God's Providence, the various Changes and Alterations in the Affairs of a *Nation*, or of a *Perſon*, requiring

requiring ſuitable Petitions and Acknowledgments, cannot be well provided for in preſcribed Compoſitions, but only in free Prayer. For theſe may be eaſily foreknown, and proper Prayers or Thankſgivings provided for them, as is done, tolerably well, in our Liturgy; and in extraordinary Conjunctures, ſpecial Forms may be compoſed on purpoſe, as is alſo done, occaſionally, as you very well know, by the Archbiſhops and Biſhops of our Church. And as to particular Perſons, their Infirmities and Sorrows, whether of Mind or Body, and their grateful Acknowledgments of Relief and Comfort received under each of them, may be ſuited by proper Forms, or remembred under large and general Expreſſions. You think, I ſuppoſe, this is not enough, but that the Particularities of each one's Caſe ſhould be repreſented, diſplay'd, and ſpread before God, and the Congregation. But, Sir, there's no Occaſion for it; and ſometimes when it has been done, it had been much better let alone. Stories go about of ſpecial Caſes having been particularized and explicated in ſuch a manner, as has been juſtly eſteem'd ridiculous, and very offenſive to the Congregation. And ſuch is the ſcantling of ſome People's Judgment and Diſcretion, that they may be eaſily believed. This, however, is certain, that ſet Forms may be ſo framed as to comport much better with extraordinary Caſes and Occaſions, than free Prayer can with common and ordinary ones. A precompoſed Form may comprehend a vaſt Variety of Matter, and all the common Wants and Deſires of a Chriſtian may be collected and taken into it, which is impoſſible to be done in an extemporary and unpremeditated Prayer; for that will contain nothing but what comes into the Man's Heart, or Head, during the Time of Praying. And if we ſuppoſe he premeditates, and forecaſts in his

Mind the whole Matter of his Prayer, and means to take in *all Things that be requiſite and neceſſary as well for the Body as the Soul*, he will be apt to forget many things when he comes to be engaged in the Duty. And, accordingly, I doubt moſt of your Prayers are very barren of Matter, compared with the Fullneſs of our Liturgy. We pray therein for all Kinds of Bleſſings, and deprecate all Sorts of Evil, ſpiritual and temporal: We pray for *Peace, Unity*, and *Concord to all Nations:* We pray for our own Church and Nation, for the King's Majeſty, that he may be richly and *plenteouſly endued with all Heavenly Gifts*, that he may *live long in Health and Wealth, overcome all his Enemies, govern* his own Subjects *quietly and godly, and finally attain everlaſting Felicity* for himſelf: For his Royal Iſſue we alſo pray, that they too may be *endued with Heavenly Grace, proſpered* here *with all Happineſs*, and come hereafter to *the Kingdom of God:* For the High Court of Parliament, that *all their Conſultations may be* as well *proſpered* as *directed to the Advancement of God's Glory*, and *the Welfare of the Kingdom*; for all in Authority, that they may uſe the Power that is committed to them for the *miniſtring of Juſtice indifferently* and impartially, and *for the Maintenance of Virtue and true Religion:* For the Church univerſal, beſeeching God that he would *rule and govern it in the right Way*, and *continually inſpire it with the Spirit both of Truth and Concord*, and that all who name the Name of *Chriſt* may *agree in the Truth of his holy Word*, and *live together* in holy *Love* and godly *Unity:* For the Biſhops and all the Clergy, that God would *pour continually upon them his Grace* and Bleſſing, and *illuminate them with true Knowledge*, that *in their Doctrine his true and lively Word may be ſet forth*, and exhibited, accordingly, in their own Converſations. We pray that all the *Crafts and Subtleties* both

both of wicked *Men and Devils* againſt the Church of God, *may be diſperſed and brought to nought, that, being hurt by no Perſecutions, we may be evermore* at liberty to *ſerve him in it*. We intercede with God that he would *have Mercy upon all Men*, that he would keep and preſerve all who are expoſed to Danger whether *by Land or Water*, the *Woman labouring with Child, the Sick, the Priſoner, the Captive, the Orphan, and the Widow*, and that he would ſuccour all under their ſeveral Neceſſities, Deſolations, and Oppreſſions. We plead alſo for *our Enemies*, for *thoſe who perſecute us*, and ſpeak evil of us, that God would *forgive them* their paſt Wickedneſs, and *turn their Hearts* from it, for the future: For thoſe who *ſtand* and manfully reſiſt the Aſſaults, the Crafts, and Temptations of the Devil, that they may be yet *more ſtrengthened*; for the *weak-hearted*, and feeble-minded, who have been ſometimes foiled, and are growing faint with the Combat, that they may be *comforted* and ſupported; and for the actually *fallen*, that they may be *raiſed again, and* all of us *tread down Satan under our Feet*. We make, too, our Supplications in behalf of thoſe who have wilfully and obſtinately *erred*, and thoſe alſo, Sir, who, with pure Intentions, like your own, *have been deceived*, that God would give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, and *bring them* back *into the Way of it*. In regard to *Temporals*, we pray, as we are taught to do, for our *daily Bread*, for the *Preſervation of the Fruits of the Earth, that in due Time we may enjoy them*. We pray, that we may be *defended in all the Aſſaults of our Enemies*, that we may not *run*, in the *Day, into any kind of Danger*, and be delivered from the *Perils of the Night*; and that we may alſo be delivered from *all Sedition, Conſpiracy, and Rebellion*, and from thoſe fearful Calamities of *Peſtilence* and *Famine, Battle* and *Murder*, with which God often

viſits a ſinful People, and which we have too righteouſly deſerved. In reference to *Spirituals*, we never aſſemble without making an humble Confeſſion of all our Sins, thoſe of Omiſſion as well as of Commiſſion, beſeeching God to *have Mercy* upon us, to *ſpare us*, and *reſtore us*, and to *give us true Repentance that we may live hereafter a godly, righteous, and ſober Life, to his Glory.* We pray that we may not be *led into Temptation*, and have Strength to reſiſt it, that we may be *delivered from all Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart*, and from that *Contempt of God's Holy Word and Commandments*, which is now ſo prevalent and faſhionable among us. We pray to be *delivered from Hereſy and Schiſm*; from thoſe *Spiritual* Sins of *Envy*, *Hatred*, *Malice*, *Uncharitableneſs*, *Vain-glory* of Temper, *Pride* of Mind, and *Hypocriſy* of Heart; and from the *fleſhly* ones of *Fornication*, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, and all other Sins of the more *deadly Sort*, which *they who do ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; and from thoſe alſo which moſt eaſily beſet us *in the Time of our Tribulation* as well as *in the Time of our* Proſperity and *Wealth*. And that we may be preſerved from all theſe Sins, and enabled *to amend our Lives according to God's Holy Word*, we beg of him to *grant us his Holy Spirit*, and to *cleanſe our Hearts by its Inſpiration*, to give us *Peace* of Conſcience *which the World cannot give*, to give us *Grace* and *Increaſe of Grace*, to *give us Hearts both to love and dread him*, and to *incline them to keep* each Law of the Ten Commandments. In regard to *Eternal Things*, we pray him to *deliver us in the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment*, and to *grant us, in the World to come, Life everlaſting*. In regard to the *common Supplications* we have been making unto him, we beſeech him to *fulfil the Deſires and Petitions of his Servants*, and

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in regard to the Word read or preach'd, we alſo humbly beſeech him to *give us Grace that we may hear it meekly, receive it with pure Affection and due Reverence, and bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit.* Nor do we ever fail to bleſs and praiſe him *for our Creation, Preſervation, and all the Bleſſings of this Life, for the Redemption of the World by our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *for the Means of Grace, and for the Hopes of Glory.*—— Theſe Things, which I have thrown together with little Order and Connexion, omitting many others which it would have been almoſt endleſs to recount, you will grant, I ſuppoſe, to be fit Matter for the common Prayers and Supplications of the Church; and I now, Sir, put it to you, if you have ever found ſo great a Variety of Matter in any one of *your* ordinary Prayers. I doubt, ſome half a dozen, or very few more, of theſe Particulars, ſet off with a Multiplicity of Words, and, perhaps, ſome — Repetitions, will be ſufficient Matter for one of *your* Prayers. And, indeed, I muſt ſay, it behoves your Miniſters to be as ſparing as they can of the Matter of their Prayers, that they may not be always Praying for *the ſame Things.* For a *conſtant Round* of the *ſame Things*, may be, 'tis like, as tireſome and diſguſting to *their Audiences*, and cauſe as much Coldneſs in *their* Spirits, as *a conſtant Round of the ſame Phraſes and Expreſſions.*

It is one of your Pleas in favour of extemporary, or conceived, Prayers, that the various Changes in National Affairs, as well as in thoſe of Private Perſons, can be provided for, with ſuitable Petitions, in *them* only, and not in ſet and preſcribed Forms. This Pretence I took notice of, and have anſwered *above*; and you muſt give me leave to obſerve *now*, that it may be at ſome Times, and on certain Occaſions, more juſtly urged *againſt* thoſe Prayers, than,

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on any Occaſion, *in behalf* of them. Our Liturgy, Sir, is never in a Paſſion with the Impugners of it, or any other Adverſaries of our Church, or the particular Adverſaries and Enemies of the officiating Miniſter, nor will ſuffer him to mix his private Paſſions and Reſentments with his Prayers. But where Men are at liberty to pray in what Manner they pleaſe, they will be apt (ſome of them at leaſt) and eaſily *may*, inſinuate into their Prayers their own ſecret Grudges, or Party Quarrels. And let it not be ſaid, this is never done; your Miniſters are wiſer and better Men than this comes to. For, in the late Times of Rebellion it was *much* done. It was *then* very *common* among them to vent their Fury and Party-Rage in their *Prayers*, as well as their *Sermons*, bitterly to inveigh againſt the *Church* and *Monarchy*, and the *Friends* of them, and [a] ſometimes againſt each other. This unbecoming Practice may be juſtly expected to be frequent in Times of public Diſtraction; and, at *all* Times (ſuch are the Paſſions and Indiſcretions of ſome Men!) when their Minds are vehemently agitated, diſturbed, and provoked againſt either private or public Enemies. During the late Diſputes among your Miniſters about ſubſcribing one of our Articles, and one of the Anſwers in the Aſſembly's Catechiſm, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, it *was* alſo done, unleſs [b] one of your Miniſters wrongs his Brethren. *You* (meaning ſome of the Subſcribers) *have often* (ſays he) *made it your Buſineſs —— to tell Tales to God Almighty againſt us, and make the bittereſt Complaints to him, as if you thought him* ſuch a one as yourſelves, *and hoped to raiſe his Reſentments againſt your Brethren to as high*

[a] See *Edwards's Gangræna*, Part I. p. 40.

[b] See Mr. *Simon Brown's* Letter to Mr. *Thomas Reynolds*.

a Pitch as you have raiſed your own. And, indeed, this Practice is ſo indecent and ſhameful in itſelf, and ſo pernicious in its Conſequences and Effects, that the Impoſition of ſet Forms might be well eſteemed reaſonable and prudent, if it were only for the preventing or reſtraining it.

I muſt beg, Sir, your leave that I may briefly take notice of one Thing more, and I deſire it the rather, becauſe I am not aware it has yet been obſerved by any of our Writers. You muſt be ſenſible that in all our larger Congregations, more eſpecially thoſe in Town, as well of Non-Conformiſts as Conformiſts, there muſt be many at a conſiderable Diſtance from the officiating Miniſter, and almoſt *out of hearing*; and what for *Coughing*, *Hawking*, and *Spitting within* Doors, and Noiſes from *without*, it will be impoſſible for theſe to go along with the Miniſter, in any Form that is *new* to them, and ſtill leſs, if he happens to have a weak and low Voice, as many of your Miniſters, and ſome, Sir, of your own Friends, as I am informed, have: and the ſame may be ſaid of others, who are nearer the Miniſter, if their Hearing be, in any degree, by Age or Diſeaſe, impaired: but a very imperfect Hearing will ſerve both one and t'other to join with him in any Form they are well acquainted with, and have almoſt by heart. Nay, Sir, one who is quite deaf, by means of certain Helps that may be had, may, tolerably well, accompany the Miniſter in the Uſe of our Liturgy. You know, Sir, this is the Caſe of *a Lady not far from you*; and I have ſometimes obſerved with a Mixture of Pity and Pleaſure, how, by *the Help of her Bible*, and *Common-Prayer Book*, by obſerving the *Motions and Geſtures* of the Congregation, and the *Lips* of the Miniſter, ſhe has gone along with him throughout the whole Service, and have been told, ſhe is very rarely thrown

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out, and when ſhe is, ſoon recovers herſelf, and comes up again with the Congregation. Now, Sir, I pray tell me, what ſhould ſhe do at one of your Meetings, where ſhe could have no other Benefit from *your Prayers*, than ſhe has now (poor Lady) from *our Sermons*. You muſt needs confeſs all theſe People are *fairly ours*; and you ought to reſign them to us. Nay, you are obliged, and that in purſuance of your own Principle, to tell them as plainly as you do ſome others whom you have leſs Reaſon to tell ſo, that *they ought to go thither where they can moſt profit*; and that is certainly at Church; even ſuppoſing your Miniſters endowed with the Gift and Grace of Prayer in a ſupreme Degree, and to be the ableſt Teachers in the World, and their own Pariſh Miniſters the moſt meanly furniſhed with all Paſtoral Abilities and Accompliſhments.

In the next place, Sir, you ſay, *Kneeling at the Sacrament* is an *Impoſition*; and the *Avoidance* of Kneeling *inſiſted upon* by your Miniſters, is not leſs (I ſay) an *Impoſition*, than our *enjoining* it: and Dr. *Watts* himſelf, does, in effect, admit *this*. He obſerves, that, *to our univerſal Reproach, there is ſcarce any Party of Chriſtians but has been too ready to impoſe ſome Doctrines upon the Belief of their Proſelytes which* Chriſt *has not impoſed, or to require of them ſome Practices, or ſome Abſtinences about Meats, or Days, or Things indifferent, which* Chriſt *has not required* [a]. We have, here, not only a plain Acknowledgment that an impoſing Spirit is no peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Character of the Church of *England*, and that there is ſcarce any Church [b] without,

[a] *Humble Attempt*, &c. pag. 47.

[b] The Diſſenting Miniſters, when, ſome Years ago, they fell out among themſelves, charged each other with *their* Impoſitions, as much as they do the Church, at other Times, with *hers*. The Author of the Letter to Mr. *Robinſon*, tells him, p. 13. *He can*

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out it (which is ſomething to my Purpoſe) but alſo (which is more to my Purpoſe) a Confeſſion, that whatever Church ſhall require *an Abſtinence from*, or an *Avoidance* of any thing *indifferent*, is as much guilty of an *Impoſition*, as if the *poſitive Practice* of that Thing was required. And if ſo, your Churches muſt be eſteemed guilty of it, in requiring an *Abſtinence from Kneeling*; unleſs it can be ſhewn, that that Geſture is not *indifferent*, and ſome Law of *Chriſt*, or Command in the Goſpel, can be pointed out, obliging to the Obſervance of any one Geſture, in particular.

But not content with this, you do really *impoſe* the Obſervance of *one particular Geſture* upon *your* Communicants, and expect they ſhould *conform* to it. You will allow me, Sir, to bring againſt you *your own Directory*, once more; and by *that*, *ſitting* is *impoſed*, as much as *kneeling* is, by the Common Prayer. For thus it ſays, *The Table being decently covered, and ſo conveniently placed, that the People may orderly* ſit *about it*. And if it were not impoſed by *that*, it is truly and properly *impoſed* (as was ſhewn above) by the regular unvaried practiſe

by no means agree with him in p. 404 *of his Anſwer to Mr.* Bennet; *that*, This Spirit of Impoſition is peculiar to the Clergy called High-Church, *unleſs you will allow the Words High-Church to be applied to all Parties of Chriſtians; for he plainly ſees, that this impoſing Spirit reigns too much among Men of all Denominations.* And to the ſame Purpoſe ſpeaks Mr. *Simon Brown*, p. 34. of his Letter to Mr. *Reynolds*: *I have lived* (ſays he) *long enough to be convinced that Men may write againſt Impoſitions, with* an impoſing Spirit, *and cry down Impoſitions* on themſelves, *as an Infringement of Chriſtian Liberty; whilſt they can impoſe* upon others; *and bear them down, all the while, that they make no Breach upon Chriſtian Liberties. In ſhort*, all Men, *I find are very much ſet on juſtifying themſelves; and moſt Men, rather than own a* Blunder *in Practice, will fly in the Face of their* Principles: *or elſe they have* one Set *of Principles to defend themſelves againſt the Encroachments of others, and a quite* contrary Set *to juſtify their Encroachments* on *others.*

of your Churches, by your Miniſters *requiring*, and *inſiſting upon* it, and *refuſing to abate* of it. If one ſhould preſent himſelf to take the Sacrament *ſtanding*, but, eſpecially, ſhould he preſume to offer to take it *upon his Knees*, I put it to you, Sir, whether you don't think he would undergo ſome cloſe Arguings, and ſevere Expoſtulations, and be plainly told, that ſince he *ſeemed to be contentious, you had no ſuch Cuſtom, neither the Churches of God.* And I put it to your Miniſters, whether they *would*, ſhould he continue obſtinately in that Poſture, *give it him at all.* I have indeed, reaſon to believe, there are ſome few in a freer and juſter way of thinking concerning this, and ſome other Matters in Controverſy between us, and who would not ſcruple to give the Sacrament kneeling to one who ſhould earneſtly deſire it; but I dare ſay, the Bulk and Groſs of them are as rigid as Mr. *Baxter* in this particular, and would no more give it ſo than he was willing to do. It ſeems, there were ſome who had a Mind to take it of *him*, but *kneeling*. He did not care to give it them, in that Poſture; at which a certain Gentleman was ſo offended, as to become a great Oppoſer of his re-eſtabliſhment at *Kederminſter*, after the Reſtoration. Nor would he ever yield to let them receive it *ſo*, unleſs they would do it, at the ſame time with others who received *ſitting*. But this, belike, they ſcrupled to do; ſo he would not give it them at all. Dr. *Calamy* in his Abridgment of the Life of Mr. *Baxter* (p. 296. 2d Edit.) relates ſuch a Story of him; not, I aſſure you, Sir, with any Blame, but with evident Tokens of his Approbation of this Stiffneſs. Could ſuch a Conduct and Behaviour, and ſuch a manifeſt Approbation of it, have been ever expected from two ſuch Advocates for Condeſcenſion to ſcrupulous Conſciences, two ſuch Abhorrers of Impoſitions, as

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Mr. *Baxter*, and Dr. *Calamy* were? Though, indeed, with Mr. *Baxter* it was a common Thing *to deſtroy the Things he had before built*, to be inconſiſtent with himſelf, and contradict his own Principles.

And now, Sir, having thrown back your charge of Impoſition in regard to the Poſture of receiving, and, as I humbly conceive, made it appear, that, if *our* Church impoſes *one*, *your* Churches *impoſe*, as truly and properly *another*, we will conſider, if you pleaſe, your great and popular Objections to that Poſture which is impoſed by *us*, and try if theſe alſo may not be ſtrongly *retorted* upon you.

The Poſture, (you ſay) *wherein we receive is not conformable to our Lord's Example in the Inſtitution and firſt Adminiſtration of this Sacrament, that it firſt grew out of the monſtrous Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation*, is, therefore, *a Popiſh Ceremony, and, yet, abuſed to ſerve the Purpoſes of Idolatry, and naturally tending to it.* To the firſt I reply, that if it is not conformable to the Example of our Lord, in the Inſtitution, it is not neceſſary it ſhould, unleſs it can be ſhewn, that he meant, in the Poſture he uſed at the Inſtitution, to ſet *us* an Example, that *we* ſhould do, as *he* then did. I don't know any other *Medium* whereby this can be pretended to be ſhewn, beſides the Words of our Saviour, *Do this*. And do *they* ſhew it? Can any reaſonable Man believe, thoſe Words had any further reference than to the *Rites*, and *Sacramental Actions*, wherewith the Inſtitution was performed, or that they are to be extended to the *very Geſture*. It may be as well ſuppoſed, they are to be extended to all other *Acceſſories*, or *Appendant Circumſtances* of the Inſtitution. Why, Sir, do you not contend for the Uſe, after our Saviour's Example, of *unleavened*

Bread? There being as good Proof, and, I think, better, that *he* adminiſtred with this, as that he did it in the Geſture *you* imagine. And how comes it, that you hold not the neceſſity of uſing *Wine mixt with Water?* For the Preſumption of his uſing ſuch, at that time, is as ſtrong, as of his uſing the Geſture before mentioned. Why don't you plead for celebrating only in an *upper Room*, only in the *Evening*, and that too immediately *after a full Meal*, as our Lord is ſuppoſed to have adminiſtred *preſently* after eating the *Paſchal Feaſt?* Why do any of you allow of Sacraments in the *Morning*, and perhaps *faſting?* Why do you ever admit more than can ſit at *one Table*, or than *twelve* Communicants, the number of the Apoſtles, at one time? And why any *Women?* For there were none here. Don't you ſee, Sir, to what lengths of Abſurdity this kind of Reaſoning will run, and what Whimſies it inevitably leads to? And I wonder your People have not been yet led into them. What can be the Cauſe of their ſtopping ſhort, and not purſuing their Reaſoning as far as it will go, into other Things, the neceſſity of which may be demonſtrated, the ſame way? There muſt be ſome Reaſon for *this*; and if you will give me leave, I will preſume to gueſs *what*. I doubt, they have ſome Suſpicions of the Goodneſs and Solidity of this way of Arguing, and are, therefore, ſo honeſt, as not to uſe it a bit farther than there is preſent Occaſion for, that is, no farther than is juſt neceſſary to keep up the Separation between us.

But how, Sir, after all, are *you* more conformable than *we*, in this particular, to our Saviour's Practice and Example? It is not ſo certain as you ſeem to fancy, that he adminiſtred, and the Diſciples received in the ſame Poſture wherein they eat

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the Paſſover. It is not ſaid they did; nor can it be fairly, from any Circumſtances, collected. The Poſture, for what we can tell, might be changed, and there is ſome probability it was, becauſe, between the Paſſover and the Supper, the *Bleſſing* of the Elements, or *giving of Thanks* intervened; and one would hardly imagine that was done in the recumbing Poſture. But let it be ſo, and let all be ſuppoſed done in that Poſture (I ſhall not need, I preſume, to deſcribe it to you) how can it be ſaid *your* Practice is conformable thereto? You receive ſitting; but what Agreement and Conformity, I pray, is there between our *Lord's* and *your* Practice? It is not enough to ſay, *his* was a Table-geſture in *that* Country, and ſo is *yours* in *this*. For if *Do this* has any reference to the Geſture, it certainly directs to that *particular* and *preciſe* Geſture that was then uſing. And if that, in theſe Parts of the World, be not a Table-Geſture, it, ſurely, ought, by Virtue of this Precept, as underſtood by *you*, to be made ſo, at leaſt in the Participation of this Supper.

One Thing more upon this Head it may be proper to obſerve concerning your Miniſters, and their manner of receiving. It muſt be admitted, and, I ſuppoſe, will, at leaſt 'till the Uſes to be made of ſuch a Conceſſion ſhall be pointed out, that *they* are as much obliged, as *their People*, to conform themſelves to the Geſture wherein our Lord inſtituted this Sacrament. Now, they, whatever *others* may think, don't allow, I ſuppoſe, that *he* ever changed *his* Poſture, but contend, that he kept conſtantly in the *recumbing Poſture*, during the whole time of the Inſtitution, even then when he was *bleſſing and giving Thanks*. To be conformable, therefore, to this Example, (if ſitting, as they ſay, be really conforming

forming to it) the Miniſters, the Adminiſtrators, ought to *ſit*, and that *always*, and *never once* riſe up from their Seats during the whole Service. But do they do ſo? I doubt *not*. However, you, Sir, know better than I, whether they do, or not. This I obſerve, Sir, in your *Directory*, that it orders the Communicants to *ſit at the Table*; but when it ſpeaks of the Miniſter by himſelf, it only orders that he be *at* the Table, when he himſelf communicates, and diſtributes the Bread to others. From whence it ſhould ſeem, it was not expected, or however, not required as neceſſary, he ſhould be *ſitting*, but that it was ſufficient, if he were only *at* or *about* the Table in any Way or Poſture whatſoever. Now, Sir, will you pleaſe to inform me, whether your Miniſters hold themſelves obliged to *ſit always*, as our Saviour, they pretend, was *always* in the *recumbing* Poſture, or whether they think they may take the liberty, *ſometimes*, *to ſtand*, as, particularly, at the time of their own receiving, (as I have been informed ſome have done) or all the time they are *Sanctifying the Elements*, making their *Exhortations* to the People, or their *Prayers* and *Thankſgivings* unto God; and whether, in your larger Congregations, where the Communicants are ſo numerous that hardly, perhaps, a tenth Part can *ſit at the Table* (for, I preſume, you have no where more than one) they do not walk about the Meeting from Pew to Pew, diſtributing the Elements to ſuch of the Communicants as are ſitting there. And if they do this, whether you think there be in it any ſuch ſtrict Conformity to our Lord's Practice and Example, as you exact of *us*. If they ever walk about the Meeting from one Pew to another, with the Elements in their Hands, or if they only ſtand while they are ſtirring up the People, or bleſſing

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God; theſe are, according to their own way of Arguing, manifeſt Deviations from that Example. But if they ſtand, too, *in the Act of Receiving*, the Deviation muſt be acknowledged to be ſtill greater.

I come now to the other Objection againſt Kneeling ſet forth above, concerning the *Popery* thereof; and I aſſure you, Sir, that, in every Part of it, your Friends are greatly miſtaken. As to its *growing out of the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation*, it is a great deal too old, to have that Original. Nor can it properly be called, on any other Account, a *Popiſh Ceremony*. It is, indeed, practiſed, and ſo is *ſtanding* and *ſitting* to, on certain Occaſions, by one or other, in that Church. One of their Orders, if *Didoclavius* ſay true [a], and, I think, he would hardly romance to the manifeſt Injury of his Cauſe, take the Sacrament, ſometimes, *ſitting*. And the ſovereign Pontiff, at certain times, takes it *ſo*, and *ſtanding*, at other Times; and I don't know that he ever takes it upon his Knees. In one Senſe, therefore, they are *all Popiſh* Ceremonies, in another, *neither* of them. They are *all Popiſh*, in the Senſe of their being *all*, at ſome time, or by ſome Perſon or other, uſed and practiſed in that Church; and *none of them Popiſh*, in the Senſe of its being an Error, or Corruption, or an Abomination peculiar to it. And as to its ſerving the Purpoſes of Idolatry in that Church, it would be, I think, ſtrictly enjoined, and greater Streſs than there appears to be would be laid upon it, if it really did. It is ſo far from being *ſtrictly injoined*, that it is *not injoined at all*. There is not one Canon, nor any one Rubric, as we have been aſſured, in all its Liturgies, and

[a] *Altare Damaſc.* c. x. p. 746.

Offices,

Offices, injoining it, in the Act of receiving; and from the Diverſity of their Practice before obſerved, as well as from the Silence of their great Writers, who have treated ſo largely of the Euchariſt, concerning the *right Poſture* in receiving, one may fairly conclude, they look upon the Poſture as a Matter of no moment. *Bellarmine*, Sir, I have turned over, who ſeems to have taken in every thing that has any relation to the Euchariſt; but he has not a Syllable that I can find about Kneeling at the Time of receiving, no, not there, where he profeſſedly ſets himſelf to enumerate all the Ceremonies of the Maſs. I have alſo conſulted the *Roman* Catechiſm compoſed by order of the *Trent* Council, where alſo there is not a Word about it. And yet, in both, ſome very minute and inconſiderable Matters, ſuch as communicating faſting, in Unleavened Bread, and Wine mix'd with a ſmall Quantity of Water, are treated of, and in one theſe Points are enlarged upon, and ſtrenuouſly maintained. A plain Sign they make little Account of this Poſture, in the Act of Receiving, and have no mighty Purpoſes of Idolatry to be ſerved by it, but that all their Purpoſes of that Sort are thought to be ſufficiently anſwered by the People's falling down before the Hoſt, *when the little Bell rings*, at the *Elevation*, or at *Proceſſions*. At the Time of receiving, the Church neither preſcribes Adoration, nor ſeems to expect it; at leaſt, not the Adoration of the Hoſt: And indeed I don't perceive that it looks for, at that Time, *any* Adoration, whether of God the Father of all, or of *Jeſus Chriſt* in Heaven.

But ſince we are, Sir, upon ill Purpoſes to be ſerved by the Poſture of kneeling, I muſt beg leave to inform you, or to put you in remembrance of ſome

ſome Purpoſes, not very good ones I hope you will own, that were *really meant* to be ſerved by *ſitting* at the Lord's Table. To be then even with you, I muſt tell you, this Poſture *grew out of the monſtrous Doctrine of Socinus*, who, with his Followers introduced it into the Proteſtant Churches, and with an horrible Intent of throwing Contempt upon the Divinity of the Lord *Jeſus*. For looking upon him as a mere Man, they were minded, it ſeems, to ſit down with him, *as their Fellow*, at his Table; upon which account, ſitting at the Holy Table was condemned in very ſevere Terms, as *indecent*, *ſcandalous*, *irreligious*, and *againſt the Cuſtom of all the reformed Churches*, and either *ſtanding* or *kneeling* was decreed in two *Poliſh* Synods. And if one conſiders the reſtleſs Endeavours that have been uſed to propagate formerly *Socinianiſm* and more lately *Arianiſm*, both of them Hereſies in oppoſition to the Godhead of our Lord, and the Diſpoſition of too many in the Nation to fall in with them, and, at the ſame time, the univerſal Abhorrence and Deteſtation that Bread-Worſhip is in among us, one may eaſily ſee worſe Conſequences are likely to follow from the *way of ſitting*, than from the *kneeling Poſture*.

Since we are upon the Subject of Geſtures, it would not, methinks, be amiſs to make a ſhort Digreſſion (if indeed it be a Digreſſion) concerning your *not kneeling at public Prayer*, any more than at the Sacrament. Standing at Prayer, in all ſeparate Congregations, is a Poſture ſo univerſal (unleſs ſome ſit) ſo much *countenanced*, and, on all Occaſions *juſtified* in the People, that it ſeems to amount to little leſs than an *Impoſition*. One cannot, indeed, much wonder, that the generality of *your* People ſhould fall into it. Many do ſo, in *our*

Churches, where they are taught better. It is confeſſedly a Poſture ſomewhat more decent than *ſitting* at Prayer; and therefore a Poſture wherein they vainly imagine they can reconcile ſome ſort of external Regard to the Duty they are about, with their own Eaſe and Indolence. But that your People ſhould univerſally, the moſt ſerious and devout as well as others, fall into it, is ſurprizing, and can be accounted for no other way, than by the *Countenance* and *Encouragement* that is given to it by your Miniſters, who, inſtead of *reprehending* [a] and *remonſtrating* againſt it, ſay all they can to *palliate* and *excuſe* it. The humble Poſture of kneeling Nature itſelf ſo plainly dictates, and ſo powerfully prompts us to, that a Man, if he were left to himſelf, whenever he ſpreads his Sins and Sorrows before God, or makes his Requeſts known to him, will hardly do it in any other. The Body, on ſuch Occaſions, almoſt mechanically, and without the actual Volition of the Mind, *falls down before the Lord its Maker*, and ſcarce ever fails to do ſo, but when ſome *affected Reſtraint* is laid upon it.

Your Friend, Sir, Dr. *Watts*, has given us the whole Doctrine and Theory of Prayer conformable to the Sentiments and Practices of Diſſenters; and he divides it into no leſs than eight ſeveral Parts, to wit, *Invocation*, *Adoration*, *Confeſſion of Sin*, *Petition*, *Pleading with God*, *Self-Dedication to him*, *Thankſgiving*, and *Bleſſing of him*. Now, it is eaſy

[a] The Rev[d]. Mr. *Samuel Weſley*, who was educated among the Diſſenters, and afterwards conformed, declared, that "all "the Time he was among the Diſſenters, he could not ſay he "heard one Sermon for *external Worſhip*, or *Decency of Be-* "*haviour in God's Service*." See his Reply to Mr. *Palmer's* Vindication of the Learning, &c. of Diſſenters, p. 145.

to

to ſee, that Prayer, or ſpeaking to God, cannot properly be done all theſe ways, in any one Geſture, which, nevertheleſs, is unavoidable, as your Miniſters order the Matter, by blending and throwing them all promiſcuouſly together, in one uniform continued Prayer. But if the whole *muſt* be done in one and the ſame Geſture, ſure it ſhould rather be that which ſuits the far greater Part, as kneeling evidently does, eſpecially, too, when that is much more expreſſive of our profound Reverence for God and a ſtronger Teſtification, in the Face of the World, of the entire Subjection of our Souls to him. If I might be permitted to be ſo free, as to ſuggeſt to theſe Gentlemen one Thought, methinks, I would recommend it to their Conſideration, whether, ſince they have, generally, a Prayer after Sermon, as well as before, it would not be beſt, at one of thoſe times, to uſe ſuch of theſe kinds of Prayer as ſeem to require *kneeling*, reſerving for the other ſuch ſorts of it as may be performed, not improperly, in the *ſtanding* Poſture, and then *ſtand forth*, and *honeſtly* tell their People, it would become them to compoſe themſelves to thoſe Geſtures, accordingly. Such a Difference and *Propriety* of Behaviour would not, I hope, marr your Worſhip, but greatly improve, and add a natural Splendor and Beauty to it. But alas, Sir, I ſpeak in vain. Kneeling, though it be in *Confeſſion*, or when you are under *an uncommon Senſe of Guilt*, on account (for example) of National Sins or Calamities, and when *Proſtration* itſelf, if that would be convenient in a public and mixt Aſſembly, would not be improper, is never practiſed. And ſhould any one, even *you*, Sir, *preſume* to do it, I am pretty confident the reſt would not be *pleaſed* with you. *Not pleaſed*, did I ſay? they would certainly *cenſure and con-*

demn you; and I know not, Sir, whether the Superiority of your Underſtanding, confeſſed by all that know you, would, in this Caſe, exempt you from the Imputation of a moſt *weak and pitiful Superſtition*. Neither is this a groundleſs and unreaſonable Suggeſtion. For one conſiderable Congregation of Diſſenters I can name, whereof there is a Member, who rightly judges it as fit to kneel at her *Public*, as at her *Private*, or *Family Prayer*, and practiſes accordingly, but to the great *Scandal* of the Congregation, who almoſt wiſh ſhe would go over to the Church, rather than continue among *them* to be the Occaſion of ſo great and general *Offence*. This mighty Averſeneſs to *kneeling at public Prayer*, when you always practiſe it in private, may appear to ſome perfectly whimſical: But I, who pretend to have ſtudied you ſomewhat more than every Body has, am ſatisfied, there is a ſubſtantial Reaſon for it. It is plainly, Sir, a *politic Avoidance* of too much *Symbolizing* with the Church of *England*. As *we* kneel at *Church*, *you* muſt *not* do it at *Meeting*. And if ſtanding had been a *Church Impoſition*, and the *general approved* way of *our* Religious Aſſemblies, *you*, no doubt, would have taken to *Kneeling*, and been well pleaſed, as you would have had reaſon, that the fitteſt and moſt ſuitable Poſture had been *left* for *you*. It is thought expedient, that *your* Worſhip ſhould have a *Face different from ours*, tho' it be *much worſe*, that ſo it may *allure* and *draw in* thoſe, to whoſe Taſte or Humour the external Order of the Church is not ſo well ſuited.

And as the total Diſuſe of Kneeling at your public Prayer is a likely means to draw in ſome of *our* People, who have no Reliſh at all of ſuch a Ceremony (perhaps from an aukward ruſtic Baſhfulneſs,

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or from ſome ſecret Conſciouſneſs, that they want that inward mental Devotion which this Geſture expreſſes, and makes Profeſſion of, ſo it helps to keep thoſe who have been always with you in *a greater Indiſpoſition for Conformity*. By never having been, themſelves, upon their Knees, in their public Aſſemblies, they contract an Unaptneſs for it, and a kind of Averſion to it; and never ſeeing it done by others, no, not by thoſe who are accounted among you the moſt devout, nor hearing it recommended by your Miniſters, they preſently conclude there muſt be, for certain, ſomething that is bad, and, in all likelihood (for 'tis a mighty Word with them, though they know not what it means) ſome *Superſtition* in it. Hence that lothneſs to go, even occaſionally, to our Churches, where they muſt either kneel, or appear ſingular: The former they know not how to bring themſelves to, nor do they mightily *like* the latter: Whereas, had they been trained up and accuſtomed to fall down upon their Knees, at their own public Prayer, they would have been apt to do the ſame, when they appear, occaſionally, at *ours*. This would lead them, almoſt unavoidably, to *join* in our Prayers; and then the *liking* them, with great Probability, would follow. This, I doubt, is the Danger apprehended, and to be guarded againſt; and really Sir, I muſt tell you, and you cannot but own, it does not look well, but has a ſcurvy Appearance, to let your Worſhip be rather debaſed, than run any Hazard of leſſening the Number of your Worſhippers.

One may gueſs, and, indeed, eaſily believe, you have another Reaſon for this Conduct. If you were to be taught, and come to think, it was *fit and right to kneel at your Prayers*, you would ſoon

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fall into an Opinion, that it could not be *wrong to kneel at the Sacrament*, Prayer being, not only *before and after*, but *during the Time*, and *in the Act of Receiving*, the moſt proper Buſineſs and Exerciſe of the Mind you can be employed in. And therefore you act, I muſt needs ſay, very *conſiſtently* and *wiſely*, in thus making light, and extenuating the Propriety of kneeling in all public Prayer, if you are really determined not to own the Propriety, or to admit the Uſe of it, in the Lord's Supper.

As to the Propriety of kneeling in public Prayer, the worthy Perſon laſt mentioned ſeems to me in an odd Way of Thinking touching that Matter. Speaking of the Geſtures proper for Prayer, and for each Sort and Occaſion of it, *No Poſture of the Body* (ſays he) *is unfit for ſhort Ejaculations, and our Souls may go out towards God, while we lie on our Beds, ſit at our Tables, or are taking our Reſt, in any Method of Refreſhment. And when we ſay Grace after eating alone, there is no Neceſſity of riſing always from our Seat; but the Cuſtom of ſtanding up is more Decent and Honourable, when we eat in Company.* In Family Prayer, which is yet a more ſolemn Performance, he takes it for granted, that *all kneel*; and indeed all Diſſenters who keep up Family Worſhip, ſo far as I am informed, do. All this, now, is perfectly right; here is a juſt Gradation in the outward Expreſſions of Adoration, proportioned to the Occaſion, and to the leſs or greater Solemnity thereof. And who, now, would expect that public Prayer ſhould be performed in a leſs honourable, a leſs reverend and devout Poſture, than that of the Family? And yet ſo it is, I do aſſure you. For ſpeaking of public Prayer, the Worſhip of God in the *great Congregation*, he comes back again to *ſtanding*, and *thinks it not unfit*

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for this Worſhip. However he owns, the kneeling Poſture, which he truly ſays, *the Light of Nature itſelf, as well as the Rule of Scripture ſeems to dictate and lead us to, and has been, accordingly, practiſed in all Ages, and in all Nations, even where the Light of Scripture never ſhined, would certainly be a moſt agreeable Poſture for the Worſhip of God in public Aſſemblies, if it might be had with Conveniency.* Pray, mind it, Sir; it is but *a*, not *the* moſt agreeable Poſture for public Worſhip; *one*, as it ſhould ſeem of the moſt agreeable, but not the moſt agreeable *of all*. And, yet, one would think, it muſt be *the moſt agreeable of all*, if it be *dictated by Nature, inforced by Scripture, and recommended by the Practice of all Ages and Nations*, as it certainly is, and *he* confeſſes it to be.

It will not be denied, that ſtanding is a Poſture that may properly be uſed in Divine Worſhip, and ſometimes in the very Act of Prayer. But, *of itſelf*, it is no worſhipping Poſture, and only the Motions, Actions, Geſtures with which it is accompanied make it to be ſuch. It will be alſo owned, there are many Inſtances in Scripture of the People of God, or of holy Men among them, *Standing* in Prayer; and to make ſuch a Collection of them as ſome have, and as Mr. *Boyſe*, in particular, has done, is to little purpoſe, unleſs it were farther ſhewn, that theſe were Inſtances of ſuch *Simple, mere Standing*, as is commonly practiſed in your Congregations. When *Abraham ſtood before the Lord, Gen.* xviii. 22. to make his Prayer and Supplication to him, when the *Levites ſtood up, Neh.* ix. 4. in Prayer and Confeſſion, and other *Jews* (as they often did, 'tis acknowledged) prayed *ſtanding*, as the *Phariſee* and *Publican*, who went up to the Temple to pray, are repreſented to do, it is not to be thought, that they

only

only ſtood, and uſed no bodily Expreſſions of Adoration. Nay, it is particularly remark'd concerning the *Publican*, that the outward Expreſſions of his Humility and Devotion were very Strong and Vehement. Or when the primitive Chriſtians ſtood at Prayer, as every Body knows they did, on the Lord's Day, and at all Times between *Eaſter* and *Whitſuntide*, can we imagine they did not more than *barely keep upon their Feet*, in a ſteddy and compoſed Poſture, or that they *ſtudiouſly* and even *ſcrupulouſly* refrained from all ſuch Geſtures as were *naturally*, or by *generally received Uſe*, expreſſive of their Devotion? No, ſurely; that was not the Way of the Church of God, in thoſe Ages. They pray'd with Hands ſpread, and Eyes lifted up to Heaven. *Illuc ſuſpicientes Chriſtiani*[a] (ſays Tertullian) *Manibus expanſis, quia innocuis, Capite nudo, quia non erubeſcimus, — oramus* — There was then, in their Religious Aſſemblies, not only a greater Decency and Compoſedneſs of Behaviour, but ſtronger outward Expreſſions and Demonſtrations of the devout Affections of their Hearts, than are to be ſeen even in *our* Churches. Their Behaviour at Church was truly edifying. One may, indeed, be edified with ſeeing a Congregation ſtanding at their Prayers, if, at the ſame Time, one could ſee, *all over it*, ſuch an outward Behaviour, as could be *properly* called *Worſhipping:* But it would be to me little Edification (I muſt needs confeſs) to behold them, although with proper Gravity and Compoſedneſs of Countenance, *indolently* leaning upon their Pews, with perhaps, Hands *looſely* hanging down, Eyes, inſtead of elevated and lifted up to Heaven, either roving; or elſe fix'd upon the Ground, or on the

[a] Apolog. c. 30.

Face

Face of the Miniſter, as you well know, the general manner (I ſpeak it without Scorn) of your Congregations is: Inſomuch that I am confident, any Foreigner, who ſhould be quite a Stranger to our Language, were he to enter *in time of Prayer*, would take it for *Sermon-time*, and little think thoſe People were addreſſing themſelves to God, but only liſtening to one who was addreſſing himſelf to *them*. And this, I think, evidently ſhews, that ſtanding, conſidered ſimply in itſelf, is not an adoring Poſture, and much leſs to be preferr'd to the more humble and honourable one I am contending for.

If this were not ſo, and thoſe Gentlemen who take it upon them to juſtify the ſtanding Poſture at all times of public Prayer, were not a little conſcious thereof, what need had there been to make an excuſe for *not kneeling*, to wit, *the want of Conveniency for it?* This want of Conveniency for kneeling is pleaded by [a] Mr. *Boyſe*; and the [b] *good Doctor* pleads the ſame in the Paſſage above quoted, and in other Places takes care to put us in Mind of it. But what ſort of *Conveniency* would they have? Have they not as good as our Lord had in the *Garden*, or St. *Paul* upon the *Sea Shore?* And if they want a *Conveniency* for Kneeling with *more eaſe*, they may accommodate themſelves for a Trifle. Or do they want *room?* As to your Miniſters, Sir, are *they* ſo thronged? Do the People intrude into their *Pulpits*, and not give them room to fall down upon their Knees, no, not then, when they are pouring out their Souls before God, confeſſing their Sins, and the Sins of their People, and ſupplicating for Mer-

[a] Remarks on the Biſhop of *Derry*'s Diſcourſe, concerning the Inventions of Men in the Worſhip of God, p. 174.

[b] Guide to Prayer, p. 78.

cy, on the moſt ſolemn Occaſions of Humiliation? And are *all* your Meetings ſo full, that you, Sir, of the Laity can but juſt ſtand upright by one another? Are you, one and all, ſo pent, as not to be able to bow a Knee unto the Father of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt?* The whole Church, Sir, ſees it is otherwiſe, and that not only you, but many others in every Congregation, it may be, of much leſs Conſideration than yourſelf, are not *ſo* incommoded as this comes to, and have Convenience enough for Kneeling, if you were minded to make uſe of it. And ſuch as have *not*, may find it alas, in *all*, or in *ſome or other* of our Churches. We have been often told, in excuſe for your Separation, the Churches were ſo full, that you were forced to ſet up ſeparate Aſſemblies, or great Numbers muſt be without any publick Worſhip. But now, it ſeems, the Caſe is altered; the Meetings are fuller, and more crouded than the Churches. If ſo, it is high time, (in your *own* way of Reaſoning) *to come back again*, and return to the Church whence you went. ——Was there ever ſuch an Excuſe as this! I ſhould *ſmile* to myſelf to ſee *ſome others*, but I am really concerned to find *ſuch a Man* as Dr. *Watts* taking up with this pitiful Pretence for a Practice, which is plainly maintained for other Reaſons: And I can't forbear making upon it this melancholy Reflection, — *How great and prevailing is the Influence of Party-Attachments! And how mighty the Power of Prejudice, ſometimes without being felt, even upon devout and excellent Minds!*

I hope, Sir, now you will ceaſe blaming me in your Thoughts, as I know you have been doing, for my Temerity, in thus diſturbing the Writings of a Gentleman of ſo great Name, and eſtabliſhed Reputation in the literary World. I am, it may be,

Impar

Impar congreſſus Achilli.

But, by this time, I hope you are ſatisfied, *he*, like that Hero, is vulnerable, *in one Part*, and that I have been fortunate enough to hit it. If he is ever *weak*, it is *there*, and *there*, I think, he is *always*, where he is arguing and ſettling Points between *you* and *us*. But as he ſtands, deſervedly, ſo high in your Favour and Eſteem, I will no longer teaze you with his Slips and Overſights. And indeed, I fancy you are, ere this, pretty well tired with the tedious length of this Epiſtle, if not alſo with ſome other Properties thereof, even worſe, and *more inſupportable* than *that*. I will, therefore, here break off, and relieve your Patience, *for the preſent*. But you may expect to hear once more, and that perhaps before it be long, from,

Sir,

Your Humble Servant,

FINIS.

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